what a wicked game you played (to make me feel this way) by brawls (brawlite), ToAStranger

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Summary:

Billy knew Steve Harrington would ruin him. Steve knew Billy Hargrove was nothing but trouble.

They never expected it to end up like this.

1. i'd never dreamed (that i'd meet somebody like you)

Author's Note:

> Welcome to the madhouse! This is the fever dream of toastranger and brawlite. Chapters will come as they come. It's much longer than either of us expected.
>
> Tags to be added. Comments appreciated. < 3

Billy's always known that he was broken.

There's something wrong with him, something twisted up and turned around, upside down. He knows how the books and movies and scientific bullshit *say* he should act. How he should *feel*.

The problem is: he doesn't feel that way.

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From the moment Steve was eight years old, he knew what he wanted.

He was on the playground, with Tommy and Carol, and they were all *playing house* at Carol's insistence. It was obvious, even then, that Tommy and Carol were meant to be bound. Both of them were betas, but that never seemed to bother them or effect them, except in the way they trailed after Steve like he knew what he was doing.

Still, seeing them dart around the swing set at recess, Carol's curls bouncing behind her, Tommy's freckled face stretched in a grin, Steve knew.

He wanted *that* . He wanted someone to look at him like that. He wanted someone to chase him like that.

He spends the rest of his adolescence looking for it. Then, he finds Nancy.

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The first time Billy sees Steve Harrington, he knows he's fucked.

"Who's that?" Billy asks, eyes falling on a brunette across the cafeteria.

Billy's already found the table with the *cool kids* -- he found them the moment he walked through the doors to Hawkins High. They're not even remotely cool, or funny, or even well-dressed, compared to anyone in California. But Billy's in Indiana, now -- he's gotta make do.

Tommy -- at least Billy thinks that's his name -- laughs in that stupid way Billy already finds that he hates.

"That's Steve Harrington. He used to be the king of this place," there's a story there, in Tommy's brash tone and hardened eyes. He does a shitty job of covering up clear *history,* and maybe a little hurt, too. "He's trash, now. Not worth anyone's time."

With a snort and a laugh, Tommy's girlfriend makes her opinion known. "He's a *loser* ."

"Yeah, alright," Billy says.

He's interested, for whatever reason, in that pretty face and those big eyes, but he knows better than to show weakness in front of strangers. Apathy and disdainful disinterest is the best, he's found.

Billy's pretty sure the two of them are betas. They're too boring; just like the rest of the kids here.

The hallways of the school just smell like teenage hormones, a drug-dulled soup of emotions and frustration. There's a certain sharp, acidic scent to hormone blockers that Billy can't stand. It fogs his head, clings to his nose after every breath he takes. No one in California used blockers -- except the omegas, and even they were on low-dose ones. Just enough to keep their heads chill and prevent heats -- not enough to mask their scents entirely.

Here, stuck out in the conservative midwest, nearly everyone's on blockers. Their scents are dulled and the the air is fogged with the smell of medication. Billy's not used to it at all.

But this is going to be his life now. Billy has no choice but to make do.

“So,” he says, leaning heavy on his arm. His legs are spread underneath him, taking up as much space as he possibly can. Posturing, with the best of them. “I can’t smell anyone for shit. Who’s an unbonded omega?”

Tommy and his girlfriend seem like they’d both know the scoop *and* be pretty happy dishing out everyone’s dirty little secrets. They don't disappoint.

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Steve started taking blockers when he fully presented at twelve. He keeps taking them, even well after he starts dating Nancy, who makes her disdain of them apparent. He doesn’t exactly know *why* he keeps taking them, just that he keeps reaching for the bottle every morning, and keeps swallowing a little blue pill down before breakfast.

Just that it makes things easier. It’s something normal that he clings to in his less-than-normal life.

He only makes the decision to stop after the party on Halloween. After Nancy looks at him, calls him *bullshit* , calls everything they had *bullshit* , and decides that she’s right.

He’s seen the way she looks at Jonathan. He’s seen the way his peers follow the new guy, Billy Hargrove, around. He’s seen it and he’s *burned* , with a keen kind of jealousy he’s never let himself feel before, never bought into before, about the *raw alpha magnetism* that people like Steve are supposed to have.

And he hates to admit it, but he *wants that* . He wants to be looked at like that, wants to be *needed* like that. So, the morning after Nancy breaks his heart, he stops himself before swallowing down his blocker, and then dumps the rest of them down the sink.

It doesn’t really matter. Not at school that day, not at basketball where Billy knocks him flat on his back, and not when he asks Nancy to look him in the eye and tell him she loves him too.

It doesn't fix anything. It doesn't *change* anything. Not until much, much later when he's hiding four kids in the Byers' house and staring Billy Hargrove down on the front lawn, feeling more angry, more protective of something, than he ever has in his *life* .

He postures. He *actually* postures, and then he lays his fist into the side of Billy's face, *refuses* to back down, and realizes-- much, much later, after his face is beaten in and a bit swollen and the world is safe again-- that maybe Nancy was right about all of that *they mess with your natural instincts* stuff. He realizes that maybe something *has* changed.

Or maybe he realizes that he's always been this way, felt this way, and he's just never let himself until coming face to face with a reason to.

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Billy had been goddamn positive that Steve Harrington, with his big doe eyes and pretty pink lips was an omega on blockers, just like all of the other omegas in Hawkins. He was a caring guy, loyal to a point of absurdity, but resilient -- and a little delicate, too. Billy's eyes always tracked him through the room, like a predator after prey. He always found himself catching Steve's scent in the hallway, drug-dulled and citric as it was, and found himself *following* , lead entirely by instinct to hunt him down. To trail, to chase. The desire was *there* , finally -- unignorable.

Steve could've been a beta, Billy thought. But he hadn't wanted that. Steve being an omega made *sense* .

Finally, *finally* Billy hadn't felt so broken anymore. His instincts were right. He was damned sure of it.

If anyone had told Billy that Steve was an *alpha* , he would've laughed right in their faces.

He doesn't really feel like laughing much now, though. Now that he's been presented with pretty irrefutable evidence that he *is* broken.

He's *real* broken.

Neil was right.

Billy can't fight the way the frustration eats at him, sliding under his skin like an itch he just can't scratch. He tries picking fights, but it doesn't work out the burning feeling -- it just makes it worse.

It's how Billy ends up in the locker room, with damp hair and a towel slung around his waist, advancing on Steve. After all, what's better than taking out your feelings on the object of your frustration, anyway? Billy might as well stop beating around the bush and just go straight to the source itself.

"You played like shit today, Harrington. Thought I could expect an alpha like you to not let people push them around on the court." To illustrate his point, Billy puts a hand on Steve's bare shoulder and *shoves* .

Steve stumbles a bit, nearly doesn't catch himself, and doesn't do much more than scowl at him while he finishes toweling his hair dry, jeans slung low on his hips, face still a bit yellow in places from beating Billy gave him back at the beginning of November. He's got a thin pink line near his hairline where the plate had shattered against the side of his head.

He doesn't actually reply until he's pulling his shirt over his head, back to Billy, *dismissing* him. "What does me being an *alpha* have to do with how I play?"

Billy bristles. His teeth clench and his fingers tighten into fists at his sides.

Before Steve went off his blockers, he always yielded to Billy. Now, he ignores him, dismisses him. It makes Billy's skin crawl, makes him want to shout, to grab Steve and shake him. He wants to pin him down and *make* him submit. His instincts -- they're truly all twisted up.

"It has to do with you letting people push you around. We need a forward that won't let betas intimidate them. How are we going to win states when you keep fucking submitting instead of shoving your way through the line?"

Steve snorts as he shrugs his coat on, and actually turns to look at him. “I don’t *submit* to anyone, Hargrove. You’re a better basketball player than me, that’s all there is to it.”

Billy can’t help it. He snarls and grabs the front of Harrington’s shirt. It’s soft with wear, threadbare against Billy’s fingertips. “I’m not talking about me. You let Jones knock you out of the way and make a shot. Don’t *do* that. You’re a better player than that.”

“I’m flattered. Really.” Steve says, but he sounds anything but as he tips his chin up, as his jaw winds tight, as he places his hands on Billy’s chest and pushes him back. “But I don’t really give a fuck.”

And god, does that get Billy’s blood pumping. He promised himself he wouldn’t *fight* Harrington again -- he knows better -- but a little shoving is all in good fun, especially now that Harrington actually pushes *back* , at least a little.

Billy stares Harrington dead in the eye and feels his own heart pounding hard in his chest, unrelenting. His body is *singing* and he loves it.

“ *This* ,” Billy says, reaching out to shove Harrington again, mirroring what Steve just did to him. “Where’s this shit when you’re on the court?”

“It’s a *game* , Billy.” Steve frowns, his brows pinching over his eyes, and he rubs at the spot on his chest where Billy pushed him back. “Not some alpha dickwad cornering me in the locker room, posturing and trying to prove a point. There’s a difference.”

What Billy really wants to do is reach out and rub over the spot Steve is touching on his chest, like Billy hurt him. He doesn’t, though. Instead, he laughs.

“My god, you sound like a bitchy omega.”

Steve’s nose wrinkles up. It’s as close to sneer, a snarl, as Billy’s ever seen on his face-- but then he’s rolling his eyes, stepping away, and grabbing his things out of his locker.

“You’re an asshole, Billy.” Steve says, shoving his dirty clothes into

his bag, and he's not looking at Billy *again* . "That's not something a *bitchy omega* would say-- it's just a fucking fact."

For a blissful moment, Billy had felt a connection between them. A spark, from staring into Steve's eyes. And then Steve takes that away from him, like a *fucking asshole* .

"Don't you fucking --" *ignore me? Walk away from me?* Billy doesn't continue the thought. Instead, he just grabs Steve again, by the coat, and shoves him up against the lockers with a loud crash. "Step up your game, Harrington. Or we're gonna have some serious issues."

Steve *should* bare his throat. He *should* give in, agree, go pliant. Make himself smaller, somehow, and give in to the more dominant alpha. To the alpha that has beat him to the ground and *proved* he's better.

But Steve doesn't. Instead, he bares his teeth, keeps his dark eyes locked with Billy's, and very nearly *growls* .

"Fuck you, Billy. I'm not gonna trip over my own two feet to give you what you want." Steve says, and his face and his neck are a little red, and his expression is pinched and it looks like he's about five seconds from swinging. "I'm not one of your little followers and I'm *not* some cliche, swooning omega. So back the fuck off already."

Billy cackles, because *obviously* Steve isn't going to give Billy what he wants. What Billy wants is unattainable. It's *unnatural* .

Steve's neck is red and Billy can't ignore it. He keeps Steve pinned with his right arm and lets his left hand drift to Steve's neck. Billy's palm covers that warm flesh, wrapping around but not quite squeezing. Just resting there, a gesture of dominance. He revels in the way Steve *freezes* .

"Hm," he says, putting on a thoughtful expression. "Walks like an omega, talks like an omega, *blushes* like an omega. Where's the line, Harrington? At what point do you just give up and admit that you practically *are* one, for all intents and purposes?"

Billy can't help it -- he has no self control. Before Steve can say

anything, or do anything, he leans even closer, into Harrington's face, teeth barred in a grin.

"Do you get wet like one, too?"

There's the finest little shudder, a shiver, as Steve breathes out heavy through his nose and stares Billy down. His jaw is tight, his pulse heavy and strong against Billy's fingertips, and he doesn't shy away. Not once.

But then he's smacking Billy's hand away from his throat, shoving him back by the chest, and tossing his bag over his shoulder. He stands there, just for a second, and looks at Billy with such an expression of disgust, that Billy thinks he might stay for more.

He doesn't.

"Have a nice weekend, Billy." He says, instead of spitting the vitriol that's making his mouth purse up like that, instead of rising to the bait, and then he's turning and walking away.

2. what a wicked thing to do

Notes for the Chapter:

WARNING: Stupid boys being stupid.

Steve isn't sure why it's happening, or what *exactly* he did, but he knows that, after cornering him in the locker room back at the end of November, Billy Hargrove won't leave him alone.

Steve's face is well and thoroughly healed by now. The Gate, the demodogs, the underground tunnels, and poor little possessed Will Byers are all a distant nightmare. The night where everything changed, where Nancy and Steve officially broke apart, where Steve officially accepted parts of himself he wasn't quite aware of, all seem removed and like they happened yesterday. He remembers his heart breaking, he remembers the *need* to protect at all costs, and he remembers wanting to put Billy Hargrove on his back and wanting him to *stay there* , but it is all through a hazy film that he only experiences with clarity right after he's woken from a night terror, sweaty and breathless.

He knows that people have started looking at him differently. He's not sure if it is because he and Billy had both shown up at school carrying each other's bruises or if it has to do with the fact that he now smells every bit the alpha he's always been.

All he *does* know is that, since he's stopped taking his blockers, people have started reacting to him in new ways -- Billy Hargrove included. He mostly ignores it-- the girls who hover at his locker, the pinched look Tommy gives him whenever they get too close, the small and knowing smiles both Nancy and Jonathan have taken to giving him-- but it's hard to ignore Billy Hargrove.

He seems to be everywhere. Even after the break over holiday, after January properly sets in, Steve finds himself nearly smacking into Billy whenever he turns a corner.

Today is no different. It's snowing, steady and soft, not quite a proper flurry, and Steve is stripping down in front of his locker. He's

got his jacket unbuttoned, his scarf unwound, and one glove off, when Billy sidles up to him, grin all teeth and eyes unkind, reeking of whatever cologne he insists on wearing and the heat of *alpha* just under the surface.

Steve's become exceptionally sensitive to smells ever since he stopped taking his blockers. He keeps having sneezing fits.

"Hargrove," he sighs, tugging his other glove off with his teeth and muttering around the buttery leather. "What can I do for you this morning?"

"Who says I have to *want* something? Maybe I just wanted to say hi to my good pal, King Steve." Billy reaches out and grabs the gloves and scarf straight out of Steve's hands. "Here, let me help you with that."

Steve nearly flinches away, nearly steps back, but he's figured out that is the kind of reaction Billy is usually looking for. That, usually, Billy is *pushing* and trying to get Steve to back down.

"Thanks," Steve says, but his smile is tight around the eyes as he shrugs out of his coat, and he lets his gaze dart down over Billy's bare hands, the henley he's got layered under his denim jacket, and his worn jeans. "Awful cold out today, isn't it?"

Billy just smiles. "I hadn't noticed."

There's no possible way he *couldn't notice* but somehow, he still looks warm. Casually, Billy drapes the scarf around his own neck, and then slides the gloves onto his hands.

"No, wait," he says. "This *is* much better."

Steve back molars grind. He's never going to get the *smell* out of his scarf.

Not that it's an exceptionally *bad* smell. Just that it leaves Steve frustrated and flustered and restless when he goes home with something Billy has *shamelessly* scent marked, like some kind of subtle posturing, like even when Steve is alone he can't get away from Billy Hargrove.

“Keep them,” Steve snaps his locker shut once he has his coat stuffed inside, his books tucked in his arm. “You look like you could use them. I’ve got plenty of others back home.”

Steve thinks Billy might’ve made a grab for the coat, too, if Steve hadn’t tucked it away. But Billy doesn’t keep the gloves or the scarf. First, he just tosses the gloves back for Steve to catch. Then, he unwinds the scarf from his own neck, leans in, and then wraps Steve back up in it.

“I’m not looking for any handouts, Harrington,” Billy says.

He tucks the end of the scarf into the loop he’s made at Steve’s neck, making sure to let his hand slide over as much skin as possible. *Asshole* , Steve things. He bites down hard on the inside of his cheek to keep from calling him that outloud.

He thinks Billy is just looking to rile him up. That he’s looking to bait Steve into a fight, already, at nearly eight in the morning. That he’s getting his scent on him to prove who’s the more *alpha* alpha, that he’s touching him to see if Steve will bristle and call him on it.

Steve doesn’t. It’s hard not to. But he doesn’t.

“Of course not,” Steve says, and has to step back, to step away, because there’s nothing but *heat* and *spice* and something *sharper* in his nose, and his chest feels hot. He smiles through it. “Well. Nice as this has been, I think we need to get to class.”

Billy makes a face, but he still looks smug. “And here I was, just wanting to have a friendly conversation. You didn’t even tell me how your day was going.”

“It’s just started,” Steve says, a bit dry and a bit slow, like maybe Billy is slow. “And so far, about as well as can be expected. You know, considering present company.”

“I’m hurt, Harrington,” Billy says, making a pained noise.

He takes one step closer, to negate the step Steve took to get away, and reaches over to fuss with Steve’s scarf, like he’s trying to *fix it* . But he’s just *so close* and his fingers are doing very little to avoid

touching Steve's skin. His hands are warm, despite his lack of winter-wear, and his fingers are surprisingly soft.

"There," Billy says. "Now you look presentable."

Not that Billy seems to care that Steve wanted the scarf *off* .

Steve's throat works. He tries not to jerk back again on pure reflex.

"Did you have something specific you wanted to discuss?" Steve asks, voice tight, fingers curling tighter over his binder and the spine of his textbook. "Or were you really just so bored that you had to bother me this early in the morning?"

Billy glances at the notebooks in Steve's hands. "Maybe I wanted to offer to carry your books for you, princess."

Steve can't help but clutch his things tighter to his own chest. "Thanks, but no thanks. I think I can handle it."

"Well, you know where to find me if you change your mind," Billy says.

He has the audacity to *wink* before walking away. Steve watches him, jaw tight and fingers tighter, and he thinks his hand might cramp up if he isn't careful.

When he's gone, Steve jerks his locker back open, yanks the scarf off from around his neck, and stuffs it in with his coat. He knows, from experience, if he tries to go to class with the hint of Billy's scent in his nose, he won't be able to pay attention to anything else.

He snaps it shut again, once everything is tucked away, and takes a breath and finds the hint of *warmth* still clinging to him. Eyes closed, he presses his forehead to the cool metal of his locker door, and breathes slow. It doesn't help.

After a moment, he finally pushes away, and heads down the hall toward his first period. He tries to put any thoughts of Billy behind him, but with his scent still clinging to Steve's skin, he can't escape him.

He doesn't know what that means.

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When Billy was fourteen, his father had him all figured out.

By fourteen, his hormones were kicking in, raging against him, rattling his brains. By fourteen, he should've been going *wild* over all of the newly presenting omegas in his school. By fourteen, he should've been making his father proud.

Billy knows he'll probably never make his father proud. He'd thought, for the briefest of moments when he'd met Steve Harrington, that he might've just found someone to appease Neil Hargrove. Turns out -- not so much.

But Billy knows how to fake it. He's learned that much in the intervening years.

Sharon Mumford is his ticket to happiness. She's one of the only omegas at school who's on low-dose blockers, which means she still reeks of her status when it comes to discerning noses. She likes Billy, too, because *everyone* likes Billy -- except Steve and his friends, anyway. But Sharon likes him, Sharon smiles at him, and Sharon *loves* it when Billy leans in real close and asks if she's cold on such a chilly day like this.

So -- Sharon Mumford wears Billy's jean jacket all day long.

Sure, it leaves Billy freezing as hell in his henley, but he's not about to complain. He's got a pretty girl, an available omega, in his jacket and everyone's eyes are on him. It's great. It's perfect.

He'll steal the jacket back from her after the day is done, shrug it back onto his shoulders, and walk into his house smelling like an omega. It's brilliant, is what it is.

Unfortunately, Billy's not expecting Sharon to come to basketball practice during his gym period. He's not expecting her to sit on the bleachers with her pack of friends and giggle and *wave* at him. He's not expecting to keep catching whiffs of their two scents combining on the air -- and it's *wrong, wrong, wrong* .

It throws Billy off his game so much that Steve Harrington shoves past him on a play and Billy stumbles and falls flat on his ass. Throws him off his game so much that Steve *notices* , stops, and passes the ball off to someone further down the court before he turns his attention down on Billy.

“You okay?” he asks, breathless and flush and sweating.

Up close, Steve is all Billy can smell. Billy vaguely registers the sharp sound of the whistle blowing, the coach calling for a time out. The coach echoes Steve’s question in a bark -- Billy *never* falls. He never lets himself get pushed around. No one’s that stupid.

“I’m fine,” he says with a snarl, angry at his own misstep, his own addled head.

He still feels a little dizzy, a little disoriented. It doesn’t help that Sharon is up on the bleachers, shouting his name.

“Jesus, you’d think I broke something,” Billy huffs, and doesn’t look her way. “I need some water,” he says, starting to push himself up from the ground.

Steve offers his hand out, into the space where Billy is still propped up on his elbows, frown creasing his brow and the curve of his lips. Like he’s worried. Like he *cares* .

Billy can’t help it -- he shouldn’t, but he *wants to* -- so, he takes Steve’s hand. He lets the Steve help him up.

“Didn’t think you had it in you,” Billy says, even though he knows he fell because he was distracted. “Good job.”

Steve is still frowning, his brow still pinched, but he nods his head, his fingers tight over Billy’s. “Thanks,” he says, but he sounds uncertain, shaky and unconvinced, about it. “You sure you’re good?”

Billy puts on a smile and tugs his hand away from the warmth of Steve’s.

“Of course I’m sure. Jesus, Harrington, you’re worse than her.” Billy nods up at the bleachers to Sharon, and then turns on his heel to

stalk off to get some water from the fountain.

After gym, Billy lingers too long in the showers. If he waits long enough, he figures he can be late to his next class, which means Sharon will have already left for hers. He won't have to see her until the end of the day, when he'll find her by his car and be enough of a dick that she'll toss the jacket back in his face.

It was a good plan, up until it wasn't, he thinks. She's an alright girl, if a little boring. She's popular, but prissy. Smart, and silly. The worst part is that it's not even *that;* it's not even her personality. It's just -- everything else about her. Her scent holds no appeal to him, nor does her demeanor. And there's nothing Billy can do to fight instinct. He just *doesn't want her* , plain and simple.

At least Billy'll go home with a jacket that smells like omega. But he has to make it to the end of the day being *cold as fuck* and grouchy about it.

He turns off the shower and wraps a towel around his waist, only to find Steve Harrington by the lockers in a similar state of undress.

Billy doesn't want to think Steve is lingering, but he's usually dressed by the time Billy emerges from the steam of the showers. Usually halfway out the door, trying to get away, trying to avoid Billy as much as he can.

Today is different. Today, Steve seems to be *waiting* .

"You played like shit today, Hargrove." He says, eyes on his own feet as he finishes drying off; it's a question, Billy knows, but Steve doesn't actually ask him.

"Couldn't take your eyes off me like usual, huh, Harrington?" Billy asks, but he knows his words lack the usual bite.

He's tired and he's cold, and the heating system in the school sucks. The water still clinging to him is already cool, even though his skin is pink from the scalding heat of the shower, but the cold matters a little less when Steve looks up at him, those big dark eyes narrowed, his lips pressed thin.

It's the face Steve makes when he thinks Billy is being particularly annoying, a face Steve makes at him a lot, like he's swallowing his own words, but there's a softness to it that Billy can't put a name to. Not until Steve is already looking away again, pulling his pants up over his black briefs, his towel draped over his shoulders to catch the water still dripping from his hair.

It's *concern* .

"You really should layer up more," Steve says, not looking at him as he plops down onto the bench so that he can roll his socks on, so that he can pull his shoes on after; his fly is still undone and the muscles in his back and shoulders are tight, rigid, with tension. "Winter's not even half over. You're gonna get sick, if you aren't already."

"That's not how that works," Billy says, because he's never much believed in old wives' tales.

Billy drops his towel to the ground and starts sliding on his own clothes -- white briefs and too-tight jeans -- trying to ignore the biting press of cold air around him. He'd be warmer if he shoved himself into Steve's space, he knows. If he tried to pick a fight. But he doesn't *want* to fight right now.

Instead, he wants to fold himself against this half-dressed version of Steve and slide his hands over the smooth expanse of Steve's stomach and trace the muscles there. Wants to press his face against Steve's heart. Wants to breathe him in.

"Besides," Billy says. "I'm a chivalrous guy. Sharon's got my jacket."

"Chivalrous. Right." Steve mutters around a scoff of a laugh, pushing back to his feet and scrubbing his towel against his hair until it stands at all ends, and even from here Billy can smell nothing but soap and *Steve* -- there's no hint of Billy anymore, from this morning, and it sort of drives him crazy to know that he's a clean slate, that he can wash Billy from his skin so easily. "You know, Sharon Mumford has a bad habit of stealing jackets. I wouldn't count on getting it back."

And Steve doesn't say it, but it's certainly implied that Sharon

Mumford has stolen one of *Steve's* jackets. That she's walked around, wearing Steve like a badge of honor, and that Billy has just been added to the collection.

"Oh, I'm getting that jacket back," Billy says. He only has the *one* , outside of his leather coat, but that's for special occasions. And it's winter in Hawkins fucking Indiana.

But --

"Or," Billy says, a smirk creeping to his lips. " *You* could be the chivalrous guy here and give me *your* jacket."

Steve's got about ten different ones Billy can recount from memory alone. His favorite is the forest green one; a bomber.

Steve blinks at him, standing there, half-naked and staring, like the thought hadn't even occurred to him. But then he's reaching into his locker, pulling out the coat hanging there, and tossing it at Billy.

He isn't expecting it. Has to rush to catch it against his chest, and it's a dark wool, soft, and *so warm* against his skin-- and he hasn't even put it on. He didn't think Steve would actually--

"Don't know how well it'll fit," Steve says, already pulling his shirt over his head and then smoothing his hair down. "It's a little tight around the shoulders-- and that's on me."

Billy doesn't care. He can't think around the hammering of his heart in his ears, the rush of blood drowning out every sound around them. Steve Harrington gave Billy his jacket. It shouldn't *mean* so much to Billy, but it does.

It fills him with a stupid kind of warmth, already smelling the mixing of their scents together. It smells *good* , smells perfect. He feels like a swooning fucking omega, and he both hates and loves it.

It takes him a little while to remember that it doesn't mean the same thing to Steve.

"Awfully kind of you," Billy says, trying to sound more sarcastic than he feels. "I'll be sure to stretch it out."

Not that Billy *actually* plans on giving it back.

When he slides the coat on over a hastily-put-on henley, he can't ignore the shiver that goes from his scalp down to his toes.

Steve grunts and bobs his head, finishes buttoning up his fly and grabs the last of his things from his locker before shutting it. His eyes slide over to Billy, linger across the shoulders, and then he's looking away.

"If Sharon actually gives you your jacket back, let me know." Steve says, slinging his bag over his shoulder, fingers flexing over the strap. "Or just drop mine off at my locker."

Like Billy would ever have a problem finding Steve to give the jacket back in person. Like he needs an excuse. Maybe he'll use it as one in the future, actually. Just -- *Damn, Harrington, I forgot it again today. I'll get that back to you tomorrow* . Until the summer.

"Will do," Billy says, and folds his fingers over the cuff of the jacket. "Thanks for the chivalry, pretty boy. Maybe you're not the shittiest alpha after all."

No, Billy's pretty sure that title goes to him, the alpha with the -- let's face it -- unrepentant crush on Steve Harrington.

Steve's smile is tight around the edges and the eyes, always biting his tongue when it looks like he wants nothing more than to lay into Billy and his ceaseless jabs. "Don't mention it," he says, and then he's backing up a step, backing away.

Billy watches him go, thinking, *obviously* -- there's no way he's mentioning his new jacket to anyone at all.

By the end of the day, Billy manages to get his own jacket back. Sharon looks a little hurt by Billy's tone and his posturing, but seems generally unphased. It's good.

On his way home, Billy pulls over onto the side of the road to shrug off Steve's jacket. He pulls the soft fabric to his face for a moment, savoring the way Steve's scent, its warmth, has mixed with Billy's. It lingers in his nose, fierce and devastating and altogether too much.

He can't help it, he buries his face in it, rubbing his cheeks against it, in a moment of pure and absolute instinct. His heart pounds, his mouth waters, and his gut heats. Afterward, he feels silly for it.

He gets out and shoves the jacket into the trunk of his car.

Billy drives the rest of the way home with his windows down, letting Steve's scent be blown off of him by the shitty Indiana breeze.

When he gets home, he shrugs on his own jacket and chokes at the way it smells like Sharon -- like *Sharon and Billy* . But his dad, when he gets home, looks placated for once, and Billy remembers the jacket in his trunk and counts the whole thing down as a win.

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Steve doesn't think he's a particularly nice guy. He's always kind of considered himself an asshole-- the way he used to act is proof of that enough. The people he used to hang out with are further proof.

Nancy says it's *low self-esteem* . That the regard he has for himself-- the asshole, the sad rich boy, the idiot jock-- is not actually proof of *who he is* .

But he thinks it. Thinks he knows it.

Giving his coat out to Billy Hargrove on Monday when he was obviously a little out of it, obviously *without* his own and braving his very first Indiana winter, is a surprisingly kind move that, looking back, he's still shocked by. Steve doesn't think he's particularly giving, or particularly *good*-- but he tries, has tried, at first for Nancy, and now for the kids.

So, when Billy shows up Tuesday with his jean jacket back on and Steve's wool coat nowhere in sight, Steve lets it slide.

He does the same on Wednesday.

It's only when Thursday comes, when Billy has worn his own jacket to school three days in a row and not given Steve is own coat back-- and he should've expected it, honestly, it's *Billy* , the only asshole Steve knows that's worse than him-- that Steve finally gets a little

frustrated. A little irritated. A little annoyed.

Enough, at least, to approach Billy at his own locker before lunch. Tommy and Carol are there, hovering, and Steve offers a terse, perfunctory smile their way before turning his focus on Billy.

“Hey,” he says, a bit dumb, because he’s not really sure how to go about saying *give me my coat back, please* , without sounding like a dumbass.

Billy grins at him, all teeth and charm. “Hey, pretty boy. How’s it hanging?”

Tommy and Carol bristle a little, because they’re still not over Steve spurning them like he did. They clearly don’t like that Billy immediately ignores them, Carol’s lips pursing and Tommy rolling his eyes, as Billy even goes so far as to turn his back to them, and focuses all his attention on Steve, instead.

Steve tugs at the strap of his backpack, shifting on his feet, and he clears his throat. “Um. Fine. A bit, uh… colder, than usual. My favorite coat has kinda gone missing. Haven’t seen it since the locker room on Monday. You don’t happen to know anything about that, do you?”

“You should really be more careful with your things,” Billy says. But he’s all smiles, even though his tone is just as predatory as normal. “Do you want help looking for it? I’d be happy to help.”

“We were just about to go have lunch,” Carol says with a frown.

Billy just shrugs. “This sounds important.” Like he can’t wait to get away from Tommy and Carol.

Tommy snorts, folding his arms over his chest, and pressing his shoulder to the line of lockers trying for casual even as he glowers up at Steve. “Why don’t you just have daddy dearest shell out some cash for a new one? Or is he out of town again?”

Steve’s face goes a bit hard, his fingers a bit tight around the strap of his bag. “It was a gift, actually, from my nonna. Sort of hard to replace something that’s from Milan.”

“Oh,” Carol blinks, like she can’t help herself, and Tommy rolls his eyes when she says: “The black wool one, right? That one’s gorgeous-- I’d hate to lose something like that.”

“Carol,” Tommy huffs, and she tosses her hands out.

“What? It’s a nice fucking coat, Tommy.”

Steve’s smile goes a little softer at the edges.

“Yeah. That’s the one,” he says, and then looks at Billy. “Think you know where I can find it?”

Billy’s jaw works, like he’s grinding his teeth.

“Yeah,” he says. “I think I’ve got a couple places we could look.”

If Steve were an omega, or even a beta, Billy’s words might sound like a come-on. But he’s not, and so they don’t. Tommy and Carol just gripe and pout and split away from them with a murmur of catching Billy later. They don’t seem to care about about Billy’s flirtatious tone, or the way he leans into Steve’s space.

It’s all posturing, Steve knows. Just another attempt to knock Steve down a peg.

The second Tommy and Carol are gone, Steve crosses his arms over his chest and shifts on his feet again. “I see Sharon gave you your jacket back,” he says.

I see Sharon gave you your jacket back , Steve thinks. *So, where’s mine?*

“Looks like she did,” Billy says. He grabs the lapels of his jacket and tugs on them, preening under Steve’s gaze. “It’s a pity yours has been lost to the winds.”

Steve’s jaw ticks tight. “Billy, that’s my best winter coat. I would like it back. So, if you could just give it to me…”

Steve trails off, a bit expectant and a bit hopeful. There’s a *please* on the tip of his tongue and a sob story on the back burner if he needs it.

He hopes he doesn't need it.

"Have you even looked for it?" Billy asks after a beat.

He looks and sounds like his usual annoying self, but there's something about his posture that suggests something like a little conflict. Steve can't be sure, but there's definitely something there.

Still, Steve can't help the small, frustrated sound that drags from the back of his throat. "I gave it to *you* . I didn't think I would have to go *looking for it* ."

Billy puts on a thoughtful face after a moment of hesitation.

"Weird. I don't remember that at all." Billy strokes over his chin, over a faint hint of stubble. "Are you cold? Do you want to borrow my jacket, pretty boy?"

"No, I'm not-- *No* ." Steve breathes deep once, hand flexing at his side, and he feels like he's five seconds from just turning on his heel, storming off, forgetting about the whole thing-- but it's the *principle* and Steve's *nonna* gave him that coat. "Seriously, Billy, stop fucking around. I just want my coat back. Please."

Billy grits his teeth together, huffs, and then *snarls* . Steve nearly steps back.

" *Fine* ," he spits out, and just like that, all the fight just drains out of him, tense muscles going loose, shoulders slumping.

Without warning, Billy turns on his heel and takes a few steps down the hallway and to the door. After a beat, he looks over his shoulder and raises his eyebrows at Steve.

"Well? What are you waiting for?"

Steve jerks forward, stumbles into motion, and Billy doesn't wait for him. The second he sees that Steve is following, he's taking back off down the hall, and Steve has to rush to keep pace-- and, even then, he's trailing behind him.

When they step out into the parking lot, the January gloom is heavy

and it's *cold* . Steve shivers, curls his arms tighter over his chest, even in the tan sherpa jacket he's got wrapped around himself. He pulls up the collar and trudges after Billy to where he's got the Camaro parked.

He watches, as Billy digs into his pocket and pulls out his keys, and he *must be* cold, in only a denim coat, and Steve feels a little bad, demanding his own coat back, knowing that Billy probably only kept it because he doesn't have anything else to use when the temperature plummets. Shuffling and breathing into his own cupped hands, Steve waits as Billy pops the trunk, as he bends in, as he pulls out the dark wool, and Steve feels something unwind in his chest.

He's smiling before he can stop himself, reaching out for it and catching the worn material between his fingers to pull it close, but Billy doesn't let it go. Steve curls his fingers in tighter, bright expression faltering, and he blinks over at him.

"Thank you, Billy." He says, and gives a little tug.

"Yeah, whatever," Billy mumbles.

He's shivering, just slightly. Steve can only tell when he looks closely, when he watches Billy's fingers tighten on the jacket with a little bit of a tremor. He holds on for a moment longer, and then lets go.

Billy shoves his hands into his pockets, shoulders bunched up against the cold. "Is that it?" he asks, voice tight.

Steve bites his lower lip into his mouth, pulls his wool coat close to his chest, and hesitates. He thinks he should say *yes* and walk away. Leave Billy and this strange tight feeling in his chest-- *guilt* -- behind in the cold.

He doesn't.

Shrugging his backpack off, he lets it drop to the snowy ground, and then unzips out of his jacket and shrugs that off too. He stands there, snow catching in his hair and on his lashes and melting against the cotton of his sweater, and holds out the tan coat to Billy.

“Brown’s not really my color,” Billy says, hesitating for a moment, but his eyes are bright and focused on the coat.

He reaches out anyway and snatches it, tugging it from Steve’s hands. Like if he doesn’t move fast enough, suddenly, maybe Steve will change his mind.

“You can keep that one,” Steve says, and hopes Billy won’t start throwing out words like *charity case* because he doesn’t have it in him to argue and Billy looks cold and Steve is an asshole but he’s not a total dick. “I have another one just like it, back home. So you can keep that one.”

And Steve pulls the black coat on, over his arms and across his shoulders, and before he even gets it buttoned, he’s struck dumb and dizzy by the *scent* . By the smell of him and Billy Hargrove clinging to the wool and the silk lining. By the *warmth* , the hint of smoke, the spice that reminds Steve of the mulled wine he had at New Years during his parents’ party, that he can’t quite name, but it makes him feel a little drunk. By *his own scent* , somehow more apparent and more *solid* , having combined so thoroughly with Billy’s, in a way it never has before-- a bit sweeter, a touch of something citrus and something woody and sage.

It makes Steve’s chest and neck and face burn. Makes his fingers falter as he finishes buttoning up the coat around himself, but his fingers are numb and he thinks he might be shaking and he can’t get the last one as something burning and hungry and confusing curls tight in his belly.

“Um.” Steve clears his throat, frowns down at his own fingers fumbling, and then glances up with a tight smile at Billy. “Thanks, again. This really is, uh… this is my favorite coat.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Billy says, the picture of uncaring nonchalance -- though his fingers, still tightly gripping the coat, tell a different story.

After a moment, Billy sighs, like he’s put out, and then shrugs on the new coat.

Then, he takes a step forward and another, right into Steve's space. Almost tentatively, Billy reaches out and takes ahold of Steve's top buttons, his palms hot when they brush against Steve's fingers. He takes his time buttoning that last one, the one Steve couldn't manage with his shaking hands.

"Jeez, pretty boy. Can't even take care of yourself, huh?"

"I--" Whatever reply, whatever words Steve had sitting at the back of his mouth, die when he looks back up at Billy from where his hands are neatly fastening Steve into the coat that is making Steve light-headed, making something familiar but incredibly new burn hot beneath his breastbone, the back of his neck heating as his fingers curl at his sides, useless and like ice against his itching palms. "I can. Take care of myself. It's just cold."

"Can you?" Billy asks, leaning in impossibly farther, until Steve can feel his warm breath. It clouds in the air around them, it's so cold. Billy tugs Steve's collar up until it's secure and warm around his neck. "Seems to me like you need someone else to do that for you."

Steve can't breathe. He can't keep breathing in the the heady, maddening scent of *them* .

There's a part of him, a very stupid and very *strong* part of him, that wants to lean in, too. Some part of him that's screaming for him to shuffle forward into that heat that Billy's radiating, or maybe skirt back and see if Billy follows.

But Steve knows-- *he knows* -- that whatever is happening is instinct. That he's reacting to an alpha who has proven himself stronger, faster, more capable than himself, and part of him wants to buckle, to tip his head over for him, and the smell of Billy's warmth overpowering his own scent is only adding to that.

It's terrifying. Steve's never *wanted* to submit to anyone before. But here he is, wanting it now.

He jerks back with a little hitch, breath hissing between his teeth as he pushes Billy's hands away. He knows his face must be flush, can feel the heat behind his ears and down his neck, and he knows that

Billy is just asserting himself over Steve again. Like he always seems to be doing. Like he always seems to be trying to do.

“I’m good, thanks.” Steve says, but there must be something that gives him away on his face, because Billy’s eyes are bright and locked with his. “I gotta-- I need to go meet with Nancy and Jonathan.”

He crouches, long enough to grab his bag from the snow and sling it back over his shoulder, and takes another step away.

“Take it easy,” Billy says, shoving his hands into his pockets, now that he’s no longer got Steve by his jacket, watching him. “Let me know if you lose anything else.”

“I will,” Steve lies, because he thinks he might need to avoid Billy, like the plague, at least until he gets his head back on straight, until he sorts his own rampaging instincts out, before he can make a fool of himself.

He turns away, from Billy and his bright eyes, but even as he walks off, trudges back into the school building, it’s not enough to shake him. Not with him still clinging to the wool, to the silk, of his coat. Not with him clouding his head.

He thinks about it, about going through the rest of the day like this, flustered and frustrated and restless-- and doesn’t think he *can* . Doesn’t think he can focus on anything else, and can’t afford to get locked in his head. Can’t even *think* about having to face Billy on the court or in the lockers with his blood burning so hot like this.

When he finds himself at his usual lunch table, finds himself in front of Nancy and Jonathan, hair still damp from the snow, he knows it must be all over his face, written in the rigid lines of his own shoulders. Because Nancy purses her lips and Jonathan sits up straight in his seat, eyes narrowed and skirting all over Steve.

“What happened?” Nancy asks.

“I need to--” Steve’s throat works. “I think I need to go home.”

“Home?” Jonathan parrots back. “Do you need one of us to drive you?”

“No,” Steve shakes his head. “No, no, I’m-- I just feel… off. I think it would be good if I went home.”

“Steve,” Nancy says, leans forward and lowers her voice. “Did you--? Did you take something?”

“Take something?” Steve’s expression twists up, and he can’t stop drumming his fingers against his own thighs. “No. Why?”

“Your pupils are crazy dilated,” Nancy says, concern creasing her brow. “Are you sure you don’t want one of us to drive you?”

“I’m good,” Steve insists. “I’m just… will you get my assignments for me?”

“Of course,” Nancy nods, sharing a look with Jonathan. “We’ll swing by with it later? Do you think you’ll come in tomorrow?”

“No clue,” Steve says, but he’s already gathering himself back up, already ready to make a hasty exit. “I’ll let you know tonight?”

“Okay,” Nancy says. “Just… drive safe, okay?”

“I always do, Nance.” Steve says, eyes darting between the two of them, and his grin is thin. “See you.”

They watch him go, watch as he tears back out of the cafeteria, and while their concern is touching, Steve can’t bring himself to pay much mind to it. Can’t bring himself to pay much mind to anything outside of putting one foot in front of the other, of getting out of there so he can get home and shower and stop smelling like Billy Hargrove.

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“Nice jacket,” Max says to Billy when she opens the passenger door of the Camaro at the end of the day.

Billy is bristly and agitated, feeling very much like he wants nothing more than to crawl out of his skin. “Get the fuck in the car,” he says, fingers drumming anxiously on the steering wheel.

Steve had ducked out of the rest of the day, leaving Billy alone at basketball and in the hallways. He isn't in the best mental spot, right now.

"Jeez," Max says, with a roll of her eyes. "Don't get your panties in a bunch."

Billy's pretty sure she heard that one from *him* , but he doesn't even comment on it.

They've been in a decent place, regarding the two of them, for a little while now. Besides the regular snapping they do, which is rote familiar at this point, it's practically amiable between Max and Billy. They're in a good place, together.

But right now, he can't trust himself to not snap too hard, so he just keeps his mouth shut.

Max buckles up, and they go.

The problem is, Billy can't show up to the house wearing the coat. It smells too much like Steve. Like the scent of two alphas, mingling. So, Billy pulls off onto the side of the road, halfway to the house, and throws the car into park.

"Uh," Max says. "What are you doing?"

"Shut up and stay put. This'll only take a second."

Billy climbs out of the car and also the coat. He puts it to his face for one second, one breath, not even caring if Max sees. Then, he rounds his car to the trunk, opens it, and throws the coat inside.

On the way back to the house, Billy rolls down his window. The cold bite of the winter air *sucks* , but it's better than his father getting a reason to rough him up.

A minute later, Billy notices a shift in the air in the car. His eyes shift to the side and he sees Max rolling down her window, too. She looks at him for a moment, nods, and then turns her head to look out the window.

Billy feels something well up in his chest. Something stupidly, blindly grateful. But he turns his focus on the road and doesn't say a thing.

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Steve skips Friday, too. Calls the office, tells them he's at home sick with a fever, and considering he bailed out so suddenly, so shakenly the day before, the receptionist doesn't even question it.

They know his parents aren't usually home with him. In the past, Steve would show up to school sick, then go to the nurse and have her send him home. They know by now, or his dad donates enough to their sports programs by now, that they let him get away with it-- especially now that he's eighteen.

He'd taken the longest, hottest shower he could the day before. Scrubbed his skin pink, until he got the smell off of him, muting his own until he was a clean slate. Until he couldn't smell anything but the vaguely herbal scent of soap clinging to his skin.

He doesn't wash the coat.

It hangs on his back door, from a hanger, on a hook. Steve can see it when his head lulls over where he's sprawled out in bed.

He knows he *should* wash it, if he ever wants to wear it again, but everytime he thinks about getting it cleaned, he falters. Stops. Second guesses himself.

It's terrible and terrifying-- but he *likes* the way it smells. Likes the way he can make out the subtle nuances in his own scent when it clashes with Billy's. Likes the way it smells like *warmth* , like *belonging* -- and, god, that's terrifying, too.

It fills him with a strange, cloying heat. A saccharine *want* that's so base, so primal, that Steve isn't surprised, looking back, that he'd had such a strong reaction to it. That he'd been shaken, right to the core, by it. That, when he'd gotten in his car and looked at his eyes in his rearview mirror, his pupils had nearly consumed his irises.

He's always wanted to *belong* . To something, *someone* , and Steve

thinks that, maybe, the instinctual side of himself, the *alpha* side of himself, just wants that to. To have something that's his and his alone, and to be owned in return.

He thinks about Billy, about the way his hand had felt on his neck back in November, and how it had taken everything not to instinctually *give* into that touch. He thinks about Billy, always putting his hands on him these days, of tracking him down just to try and put Steve in his place, and thinks that he might want that. Or something like that. Or that he wants something like that-- *the belonging* -- so bad that when Billy offers it up, even as nothing more than falling into place in the social hierarchy, Steve is weak to the temptation of it.

Either way, thinking about Billy and thinking of how *good, right, warm* they smell *together* , makes Steve's skin prickle. Makes Steve break into a cold sweat. Makes Steve ache for something he doesn't have.

That's why he doesn't wash the coat. That's also why he doesn't wear it to school again.

3. to make me dream of you

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNING: toxic masculinity in the form of alpha bullshit; unhealthy coping mechanisms; misogyny in the form of more alpha bullshit; Billy Hargrove's tongue

Billy is smoking outside the school on Monday when he catches sight of Steve's Beemer. He's leaning up against the Camaro, enjoying one of Indiana's rare mild winter days.

Conveniently, Billy is parked next to Steve's usual space. When he'd gotten there, Jonathan and Nancy had been loitering, too, both leaning up against Jonathan's beat up car, presumably waiting for Steve. Billy had glared at them until they had gone inside.

He'd looked for Steve on Friday, and had even parked here, too, but the guy had never shown up. Steve's absence had ruined Billy's whole weekend-- had left him more agitated, more on edge, than usual.

Billy watches as Steve pulls into the lot, locking eyes with him and refusing to break his stare. He watches as Steve parks, as he takes way too long to gather up his things from his car, and as he finally gets out.

"Nice coat," Billy says. It's not the one Billy gave back to Steve.

To be fair, Billy isn't wearing the one Steve gave him, either. No, he's got that one tucked away in his trunk, still. If he wears it out too much, it'll stop smelling so much like Steve.

Steve glances down at himself, a little quickly, like he might be worried he's wearing something wrong. But then his shoulders go easy at the sight of red and black plaid and lambskin patches, and he snaps the Beemer's driver door shut.

"Thanks," he says, and hesitates as Billy drags on his cigarette, head tilting just a fraction as his eyes land on Billy's jean jacket. "Did you

lose yours?"

"I didn't lose anything," Billy says, even though he probably should say, *lose my what?*

The jacket is safe and sound, and weirdly treasured -- but Harrington doesn't have to know that part.

Billy blows out a plume of smoke into the air between them. He taps his jacket pocket with a knuckle, where his cigarette pack is. "Want one?"

He's damn certain that Harrington doesn't smoke, but Billy would do anything to see Steve with a cigarette between his lips. At least then, Billy would know what Steve tasted like.

Steve blinks at him, gaze darting first to the entrance of the school, then down to the watch around his wrist. His lips thin, and he glances up through his lashes at Billy where he's leaned back, and then back down again before letting out something like a sigh.

"Sure," he says, tossing his bag onto the hood of his car, and he shuffles a few paces closer while Billy blinks at him. "As long as you don't smoke the same shitty brand Tommy was always lifting from the convenience store."

Billy tries not to get too excited, too *pleased* that Steve's accepting the offer. *That's* a weird instinctual thing he could do without, the preening because he's providing shit. He just wants to enjoy the moment, enjoy the fact that he gets to watch Steve smoke for a few minutes.

"Please," Billy says, offended. "I've got taste."

He takes out the pack and taps out one for Steve. He passes it over and pulls his lighter out of his pocket and flicks it in front of his own face, flame lit. Making it so that if Steve wants a light, he's gotta lean into Billy's space.

Steve stares at him for a long moment, at the flame in front of his face, and he shifts on his feet like he's about to change his mind and bolt. Skittish and uncertain, jaw working, but then he lifts the

filtered end to his lips and takes another step closer, until Billy can feel the heat of him radiating against his front. He leans in, lets the flame catch, and pulls until the end lights up cherry red. He finishes the drag, standing right there, in Billy's space, and breathes out as Billy snaps his lighter shut again.

His nose wrinkles up, and he holds the cigarette up like he's inspecting it, before he finally steps back again-- puts the cool morning air between them as he takes another pull. Steve hisses out his next breath and tucks his other hand into his coat pocket.

"Not bad," he says, flicking away the bit of ash on the end. "Thanks."

"Not bad at all," Billy says, looking at Steve's face, at his eyes, his lips.

He doesn't give a shit about the taste of his own cigarettes, but he does very much appreciate the sight of Steve smoking them.

Billy *knows* that Steve wasn't out sick at the end of last week. He's smart enough to know that much, to follow some logical fucking reasoning. He knows something spooked Steve off home to mommy and daddy, and bitterly, he thinks it was him.

The thought that Steve was running from him, *hiding* from him, makes something dark and vile untwist in him.

"Are you feeling better?" He asks anyway, lips quirking up on one side in a crooked smirk. "Was it a cold? The flu? Oh, I know -- it must've been your heat, huh?"

Steve's hand stalls, halfway to his mouth, cigarette burning-- and the gentle caution, the soft reserve, is quickly replaced by something hard and unyielding as his brows draw together and his mouth turns down. He takes an agitated little drag and shuffles another step away, the tips of his ears and the back of his neck pink.

"And to think I was having such a pleasant goddamn morning," Steve mutters, mostly to himself, eyes on his own boots until they're not; until he's looking up, dark eyes burning and angry and darker

because of it. “It’s a wonder you get any of the girls you do with the bullshit that comes out of your mouth.”

Billy laughs. Because it’s fucking hilarious.

Because the truth of the matter is that Billy doesn’t *get* girls. He takes ‘em out, shows them a good time and makes out with them for a while, and then drops them off by curfew. He always promises another date that never comes -- he’s usually enough of a dick at some point to make sure of that. But everyone wants to say they’ve slept with *Billy Hargrove* -- so his reputation stays solid and secure. And -- well, Billy doesn’t mind that so much. It’s convenient.

It’s better than the truth -- that he can’t get it up for anyone but alphas.

“Don’t get all pissy,” Billy says, taking another drag on his cigarette. “I’m just playing. Learn how to take a joke, pretty boy.”

Riling Steve up is so much *fun* . Billy could do it for days.

He wants to lick up the side of Steve’s neck, at the red flush that’s blooming there. He wants to lunge forward and press Steve to the car, wants to feel the way Steve shakes in anger against him. He wants -- way too much.

“Learn how to *make* one,” Steve snarls right back, his shoulders drawing up a bit, biting and pushing back today, and that--

That’s just *better* .

A shiver runs sharp down Billy’s spine. He feels the grin spread to his face, all teeth, all malice. He is *delighted* .

He feels like he’s in love with Steve’s posture, with the tone of his voice, with the way his eyes darken and narrow. Billy’s heart beats faster and his muscles clench. His fingers itch with the need to make fists, and so he lets them.

“Big words, Harrington,” Billy says, taking a step forward and blowing out a puff of smoke right into Steve’s face.

Steve winces back, waving a hand in front of his face, trying to clear the smoke away. Usually, Steve would bow out right about now. Maybe say something a little cool, a little reserved, so clinically distant, like *have a nice day, Hargrove* or *see you at basketball, asshole* -- and then he'd walk away and leave Billy itching and wanting and stir crazy.

Billy isn't sure why Steve skipped class for two days in a row, isn't sure what happened over the weekend, but he knows the second Steve shoves him back a step, face red with the cold and with irritation, that something has changed. That something has shifted, right under his feet, without him noticing.

"What is your *problem* , Billy?" Steve hisses, steps forward, and pushes Billy back again--not enough to *start* a fight, but certainly inching them closer to it.

Billy eats it up. He loves Harrington all raw and heated like this, loves the way he can still feel the press of Steve's hands against his shoulders even after they're gone. The touch lingers.

"My problem?" Billy asks, running his tongue over his lips and taking a step forward to reclaim the space he lost. " *You're* my problem, Harrington."

It's dangerously close to the truth.

Billy throws his cigarette to the pavement and reaches out, grabbing the front of Steve's coat with both hands and a sneer. Steve drops his cigarette, too, hands flying to Billy's wrists as he's tugged up onto his toes.

"It's all you, pretty boy."

" *Me* ?" Steve's fingers wind tight, *tighter* , around Billy's wrists, and he tries to pull away, eyes a bit wide and a bit wild, teeth bared-- Billy hasn't seen this, *had this* , since that night in November. "What the fuck did I even do to piss you off so much, huh? I can't *ignore you* , I can't *be nice* to you-- what the fuck do you *want* ?"

Billy *laughs* .

What does Billy want? He wants a hell of a lot of things, and none of it is anything Steve will give him.

There's no chance in hell Billy is about to let Steve or this fierce moment go. Billy is far too greedy for it. His fingers wind stronger into Steve's jacket and he pulls him a little closer.

" *This* ," Billy says. "I'll take this."

He leans forward, closer than he's ever really been to Steve before, and just breathes in. The scent of him is deep and musky and incredibly overwhelming. It makes Billy a little dizzy, a little warm, like he's smelling the first whiffs of an omega's heat. He wants to claim, to take, to possess. And maybe he wants to protect, too.

And isn't that just *hilarious* ? Big bad Billy Hargrove just wants to press himself into Steve Harrington's warmth until both their scents mingle as one.

Billy can't ignore it. He's itching to get closer, his fingers are burning and his palms are sweaty. His heart is pounding, hammering straight out of his chest. He even starts *salivating* .

He's licking up the side of Steve's face before he can even stop himself. Jaw to temple. Slow and hot.

Steve *quakes* . He shudders, all perfect and heavy and sweet against Billy. His fingers spasm around Billy's wrists, his breath catches in Billy's ear, and Billy can still *taste him* —

Knocking Billy's hands away, Steve shoves at Billy's chest, and they both go stumbling. His face is red and his hands are *shaking* as he scrubs his cheek off on his sleeve. His lips are pressed thin, like he's ready to spit fire, and Billy can see his other hand curling and uncurling at his side. Like he wants to swing.

"You're disgusting," Steve says, but his cheeks are so flush, the lines of his body trembling. "I am so *sick* of your posturing *bullshit* . Being a dick doesn't make you a good alpha, and being an alpha doesn't give you *any right* to try and make someone submit."

If only that was what Billy wanted.

“Who ever said I was a *good alpha* ?”

Billy laughs, and the sound of it is low and mean even to his own ears. But he can’t help the disdain he feels for himself, the endless *frustration* that right now is centered so desperately around Steve. All Billy wants to do is press forward, to taste Steve again -- after all, he had tasted *so impossibly good* . Everything around them feels more alive, more saturated -- like Steve has woken up something inside him that Billy just can’t ignore.

Eyes on that twitching hand of Steve’s, Billy advances on Steve, step by step. He doesn’t necessarily want a fight, but he’ll take one -- because he knows he’s not going to get what he truly wants. Beggars can’t be choosers, right?

“I wouldn’t’ve thought it’d be *this hard* to make you go down, pretty boy. Given how much of an omega you are, huh? But it’s alright,” Billy says. “I’m patient.”

“ *Fuck you* ,” Steve spits, and he’s stepping back as Billy steps forward, not quite running, not quite yielding, but certainly shying away. “You want me to bare my throat to you so bad? Prove you fucking deserve it, first.”

And yeah, Billy wants that. But maybe not in the way that Steve thinks he does. There’s no amount of *proving himself* that Billy can do that will make Steve be attracted to him. It goes against the very nature of their biology. Billy is just broken. He can’t ask for Steve to be broken, too.

Billy reaches out and catches Steve by the wrist, fingers tight against hot skin. He doesn’t want to let Steve leave. He feels like he’ll shatter the second Steve turns tail.

“Everyone else just backs down,” Billy says. “And I don’t even have to *try* . What makes you so goddamn *special* , Harrington?”

Steve laughs, half-hysteric and hard, the muscles in his shoulders bunching as he tries to keep as much goddamn *space* between them as he can with Billy’s grip hard on his wrist. Steve’s fingers flex out, and Billy can feel the way his muscles move under his skin, can feel

the heavy *thud* of his pulse right at his fingertips.

“I don’t submit to assholes,” Steve says, his chest rising and falling a little quick, a little uneven. “You want me to yield to you? Prove your good enough for me to *want to* .”

“I already had you on your back once,” Billy says. “I’d think that’d be enough. Are you asking for *more* ?”

God, Billy wants to get Steve on his back again, so badly. But maybe not quite like the night at the Byers’. Nah, he’s thinking something a little more intimate, with fewer spectators.

Billy’s grin is hungry, he knows. But he can blame that on the need for dominance, the desire to make Steve submit to a stronger alpha. Steve doesn’t have to know the truth.

“I’m happy to go again, just say the word, pretty boy.”

Something calm settles over Steve’s face. Something heavy and *knowing* , and he stops pulling to try and get away, stops trying to back out of Billy’s touch, away from his grasp. He stills, and his wrist and hand are heavy in Billy’s hold when he does.

“Do it,” Steve says, and his breath fogs between them, and he shrugs his shoulders like he *doesn’t care* . “Hit me. Knock me on my ass. Do it.”

Billy’s not expecting Steve to yield like this, though. It takes him by surprise. It should be good, should be satisfying. But the problem is -- he doesn’t really *want* what he’s talking about. What he’s posturing for. But he can’t let the opportunity just pass like this; he’ll never forgive himself for not acting on it when given the chance.

“Yeah? You want it?” he says, fist clenching at his side. He winds up like he’s about to hit Steve, muscles all tight like he’s about to throw a punch right at Steve’s face.

He doesn’t, though. Instead, Billy rushes him.

Billy pushes forward fast and has Steve stumbling backward. It doesn’t take that much effort to pin Steve against his fancy car, to

shove his body close against Steve's to hold him in. Sure, Steve's got an inch on him, but Billy's got more muscle -- so he makes it count.

"I could take you any day," Billy says with a snarl, voice right up at Steve's ear, breath hot against that tantalizingly uncovered skin. Steve smells *so good* and Billy thinks he's going to go crazy for it.

Billy holds him there for long moment. Then, he lets him go, shoving back -- but not before licking Steve's cheek again with a cackle.

"Don't forget that I'm stronger than you, Harrington. I don't *need* you to submit to me."

Steve stays where he is, back flush with his passenger door, chest heaving and jaw tight. "Then why do you keep trying?" he asks.

Billy just smiles, sweet and charming. He tries to ignore the pounding of his own heart and the way his body wants to go crawling back to Steve. He wants nothing more than to press his whole body back against Steve, to nose at his neck and claim his goddamn territory like Steve is his omega-- like Steve is *his* .

"Have a good day, Harrington," Billy says.

And then he turns around and leaves.

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Steve doesn't know what to feel. The weekend left him restless and confused and frustrated-- and Monday, when Billy was waiting for him, when Billy was *nice* to him only to turn it around on its head again, and leave Steve with too many unanswered questions, only makes it worse.

He knows only two things:

One - he wants to feel that warm, gentle *belonging* he felt when he put his jacket on the first time and breathed the scent of them both in.

Two - he *refuses* to completely yield to Billy to do so.

It reminds Steve of a story his nonna once told him, when he was

very little, about two wolves on a mountain top. One is white, as pure snow, and represents a man's hopes and wants and dreams. His kindness and his patience. The other is black, dark and endless, and endlessly hungry. Full of anger, full of contempt, full of ravenous hate.

These wolves are in an eternal struggle. Always fighting. And only one can win.

When Steve, wide eyed and too big for his little body, had asked *who wins* ? his nonna had looked at him and said:

"Oh, caro mio. The one you choose to feed."

Steve doesn't know which one he's feeding by fighting Billy's advances. But he's worried that something is *wrong* with him-- because he knew, in the way someone can only know oneself, that if Billy had laid him out, had beaten him down again, he *still wouldn't have submitted* .

At first, he thinks maybe it's from years of taking blockers. Like, maybe he's fucked his instincts all to hell and back, because he won't yield to an alpha that has proven stronger, faster, *better* than Steve. He's *supposed to* . But he doesn't *want to* .

He'd mentioned it, quietly and a little ashamed, to Nancy and Jonathan that same day.

"Steve Harrington, there is *nothing* wrong with you." Nancy had insisted, at the same time that Jonathan had looked at him, eyes narrowed a bit, mouth pressed into a curious line.

Steve couldn't help but want to squirm a bit, under Jonathan's gaze.

"I'm an alpha. Would you submit to me?" Jonathan had asked, and Steve nearly choked on his own tongue, face a bit red as his eyes had darted to Nancy and back again.

He hadn't had an answer then. Not when Jonathan had smiled, a bit crooked and a bit easy, and invited him to his place that night-- *if you're free, anyway* -- and Steve had shown up after the sun had gone down on the Byers' doorstep.

He hadn't had an answer later, either, when Jonathan had tentatively taken Steve's head in an open palm, leaned in, and sank his teeth carefully into the side of Steve's neck.

He hadn't had an answer until, after, when Steve had gone rigid and on the edge of shoving Jonathan away, Jonathan pulled back and offered up his throat in return.

After that, everything *clicked* . It was like Steve's wires had been crossed, tangled, and now suddenly had unknotted.

When Steve had finally gone easy, finally huffed out a breath and melted, tension draining from him after he'd marked Jonathan too, Jonathan had pulled back and grinned at him.

"There's nothing wrong with you, Steve." He'd said, and Steve was finally starting to believe it. "Wanting to be on even ground, wanting the submission to be mutual, is perfectly natural."

"It doesn't feel natural."

"It's a give and take thing," Jonathan had told him. "It's about respect. You respect me, I respect you. Neither one of us has any real control over the other-- unless we *choose* to give it."

"And that's-- okay?"

"If that's what you want."

"Still feels kinda weird," he'd admitted.

Jonathan had just smiled. "We can practice."

And that's how Steve finds himself, days later, under the bleachers with Jonathan Byers at lunch. They'd been doing this once or twice a day since Monday, meeting up and trying to coax Steve past his own reservations, trying to ease Steve into his own instincts.

Jonathan is nothing but kind about it. Despite his teasing to bring Nancy in on their weird little bonding ritual.

"We don't have to do this *here* , you know." Jonathan tells him as

Steve sheds his coat, shaking out the nerves from his hands.

“No, no,” Steve bobs his head, throat working. “I should try it. Just because I’m comfortable in private, doesn’t mean I am in public. I wanna be comfortable with it in public.”

Jonathan nods, understanding. “You’ve been fighting your natural instincts for so long. That’s understandable.”

Jonathan reaches forward, stretching his hand out toward Steve’s neck. He waits for Steve to nod, and then he touches, palm going hot and flat against Steve’s neck, right over that sensitive flesh.

Steve can’t help but shudder. Can’t help but draw his shoulders up, teeth clicking as his jaw winds tight. Jonathan waits for him to unclench it, for Steve to close his eyes.

For a long moment, Jonathan’s hand just lingers there, even after Steve relaxes.

“Hey, that’s good,” he says. His thumb brushes against Steve’s skin. “You’re doing so good.”

Steve huffs out a shaky little laugh, squinting one eye open, but his cheeks are a little pink under the praise. “It’s fine, man. Just-- do it, okay?”

Jonathan laughs, too. But it’s a kind noise, a sweet one. “Alright,” he says.

His hand shifts a little, moving to the back of Steve’s neck so that he can lean in. His breath comes hot against Steve’s skin for a beat, then another, and then Jonathan’s teeth are pressing down against the flesh of his exposed throat. Jonathan doesn’t bite down hard at first, just lets Steve get used to it, to the sensation of submitting to another alpha. He waits until Steve relaxes once more, and then he bites a little harder, all while the fingers of his other hand are soothing gently over Steve’s skin.

Steve shudders, eyes squeezing shut tight. It's always a struggle, to stay still, to not squirm away -- especially when he feels the touch of pain, the hint of *too much* .

But then, like always, the fight rushes right out of him.

He slumps, muscles unwinding, and his head lulls over into Jonathan's careful touch. His breath evens, his heart slows, and there's a heady rush of *warm warm warm* . Of that belonging Steve is so hungry for.

His fingers tingle a bit. His lips, too. Like he's drunk too much.

But the thought of fighting is the furthest thing from his head.

Easy and pliant, hands braced on Jonathan's shoulders, Steve sighs -- pleased and soft -- and lets his eyes flutter open to clash instantly and suddenly with Billy Hargrove's wide blue gaze.

There, only twenty yards away, at another break in the bleachers, stands Billy. His collar is turned up to the cold and there's an unlit joint hanging from his lips. The lighter in his hand is frozen in its movement, stalled halfway to the rolled joint. He doesn't move a goddamn muscle -- just stares at Steve over Jonathan's shoulder. Looking surprised. Looking hungry.

Jonathan takes that moment to pull carefully back, to steady the back of Steve's neck with the sturdy grip of his hand. "Hey," he says, checking in with a smile. "Not so hard, right?"

He's completely unaware of Billy Hargrove standing statuesque behind him.

Without a second thought, without hesitation, Jonathan tilts his head and bares his neck to Steve.

And Steve-- Steve only hesitates for as long as it takes to move his hands. To settle one at Jonathan's nape, like he did for Steve, and the other at his shoulder, pulling aside his collar.

Then, eyes still locked with Billy's, he leans in. Leans in, takes a second, a bare moment to enjoy Jonathan's clean, cool scent -- and then he *bites.*

Jonathan is instantly easy in his hold. Blind in his trusting. Steve revels in it, in feeling like some part of him gets to have this --

someone to trust completely, someone who trusts him totally.

Billy is still watching, still frozen, though Steve can see the way his chest rises and falls around each breath, and Steve thinks:

This is what you don't have.

Then, treacherously:

This is what I could give you.

But then Jonathan is shuddering, and Steve snaps back to focus on him. He pulls back, careful of his teeth against Jonathan's skin, and soothes the bite mark he's left with a careful thumb.

“That was really good, Steve.” Jonathan says, and he looks about as relaxed as Steve suddenly feels.

Like it's down to the bone.

When he looks back up, Billy is gone.

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Billy takes the rest of the afternoon off and hightails it to the quarry with his weed and a bottle of cheap whiskey he picks up from the sketchiest place in town. He barely notices the drive, just realizes that suddenly he’s *there* , head swimming and still breathing ragged.

He paces for a while and smokes half a pack. He kicks some rocks into the quarry, sending each one along with a curse as it goes. He punches the trunk of a tree until his knuckles are bloody and raw. He fumes. And he fumes and he fumes.

It’s cold today, but he can’t bring himself to drag Steve’s coat out of his trunk. He’s not even as cold as he should be, given all the shit twisting up inside him.

He still can’t get Steve’s eyes out of his head, dark and hungry, as they met Billy’s over the top of Jonathan’s Byers’ shoulder.

Goddamn fucking Jonathan Byers.

Billy's gonna kill him.

He can't -- he can't fucking believe he just saw Jonathan take Steve's neck in his teeth in the picture of perfect submission. He can't believe that he saw *Steve get Jonathan's neck in his teeth.*

He can't get over the picture perfect image of Steve submitting. Of his eyes falling closed and his muscles going loose in blissful surrender.

But there's also something Billy can't get over about the sight of Steve having another alpha under his teeth. It was startling. Weirdly heart-wrenching. It makes Billy shiver, despite the fact that he suddenly feels hot all over, sweaty, like his skin is too small.

The weed helps him forget some of it. The whiskey helps with the rest.

He has a little while to sober up before he picks up Max. He falls asleep on the hood of the Camaro for a couple hours, just staring at the boring ass Indiana sky.

Unfortunately, he ends up in front of the middle school parked directly behind a very familiar Beemer.

Billy can't ignore it. He can't just sit behind Steve's car and pretend he didn't watch Steve and Jonathan's little play session under the bleachers. So, he slides out of his car and sidles up to the side of Steve's. He knocks on the window, grinning down at Steve below him, until Steve rolls the glass down.

"Nice little show you put on, Harrington," Billy says, swiping his tongue across his teeth.

Steve's fingers are tight over his steering wheel. His eyes are narrowed. His shoulders are drawn up and taut. He looks nothing like the soft bliss Billy had happened by earlier. Nothing like the *alpha* staking his claim and relenting to another's.

He looks guarded, and maybe a bit cold, and he purses his lips at Billy like he'd rather be talking to anyone else.

"Wasn't expecting an audience," Steve says.

Billy huffs out an unfriendly noise. “Yeah, that was pretty damn clear.”

It irks him, to no end, that Steve submitted to Jonathan Byers before he submitted to Billy. But he’s not just jealous of that. No, life isn’t that goddamn simple, is it?

“Looks like you had a pretty decent time,” Billy says with a sneer, eyes on the red marks on Steve’s throat.

He wants to smooth them away with his fingers, to coat Steve’s neck with his own scent, but he doesn’t dare reach out and touch. Right now, he thinks his hands might shake, if he were to try.

“I did, thanks.” Steve says, and it’s as pleasant as it is *cold* , a blatant dismissal as Steve looks away, looks out the front windshield, and *no longer at Billy* . “Was there something else you wanted? Or can I go back to avoiding you in peace?”

Billy clenches his teeth, unsure of how to proceed. He wants to leave, and he also doesn’t want to let Steve go. He doesn’t want Steve smelling like anyone else, especially not *Jonathan Byers* .

“Yeah, actually. What did Byers do, huh? To make him a good alpha? Since your criteria are so high.”

“Well,” Steve pauses, glancing up at Billy through his lashes and plastering on a tight smile. “He *asked* . He asked me if I would-- very nicely, actually-- and I said yes.”

Billy narrows his eyes. Byers asked. He *asked* . What the fuck is Billy supposed to do with that?

“Yeah?” Billy says, glancing up momentarily to look around the car like he's about to do something shady. Like he can't get caught. “And if I asked you, all fucking nice and shit, what would you say?”

Blinking up at him Steve stares, like he can’t quite believe Billy is even offering-- even as a hypothetical. Then, his gaze strays, down over his open coat, over the grey shirt stretched over his chest, *lower* , and then back up again.

He tilts his head, twists a bit in his seat, and there’s a challenge in his eyes as he pretends to consider it. Like he’s about to call Billy on his bluff and he wants a good view of it.

“Maybe,” Steve says. “I’d say maybe.”

Steve is always full of goddamn surprises.

Billy isn't sure what to think of it. He doesn't know where Steve stands. The only thing he's positive of is that Steve couldn't possibly want what Billy wants, isn't offering exactly what Billy needs -- but Billy will take what he can get when it comes to Steve.

So, he tosses a grin on and feels a little elated. “I'll keep that in mind,” he says, just in time for the kids to come running toward their cars.

Steve blinks up at him, like that wasn't the answer he was expecting at all.

“Duty calls,” Billy says, pushing himself away from Steve's car. “Catch ya around, pretty boy.”

He leans down, winks, and then meanders back toward his car, just as Max slides into the passenger seat.

“Buckle up, runt,” Billy says, but he's smiling, for once.

Max narrows her eyes at him. “Why are you *happy* ?” she says. “Is there something wrong with your face?”

There's certainly something wrong with *him* , but right now, Billy can't bring himself to care.

4. and i'd never dreamed (that i'd lose somebody like you)

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNING: hormonal alpha boys; misogynistic language; VERY MILD dubious consent kissing; general angst; and, once again, Billy Hargrove's tongue
>
> ALSO: alternating POV AND combination POV. You'll see that periodically throughout.

“Harrington, get your head in the game or get off my court!”

Steve nearly trips over his own feet, but he tosses a grin over his shoulder, strained and tight and not at all genuine. “Sorry, coach!”

“Don’t be sorry,” he grunts back. “Just catch the damn ball.”

Steve’s head bobs, shoving his hands up through is hair to get it out of his face, and he turns back to the scrimidge.

Steve has been… *off* all day. Or maybe for a couple of days. Or maybe for a couple of weeks.

He’s honestly really not sure anymore.

Ever since Billy Hargrove had seen him and Jonathan *bonding* under the bleachers, ever since Billy had approached him after, Steve has been waiting for the other shoe to drop. Waiting and waiting and waiting some more.

It hasn’t happened, yet. Billy hasn’t approached him, hasn’t asked him *all fucking nice and shit* , to try and get Steve to yield to him again. Not since that Monday at the end of January when he’d tried to *lick* his claim onto Steve’s skin.

Granted, Billy also hasn’t tried to lick him again. Which is good. Or shoved him up against the nearest hard surface. Which has been nice

on Steve's back. Or loomed into his space, demanding and postured, to try and get Steve to finally give in to the social hierarchy. Which is appreciated.

Steve's stress levels certainly appreciate it, at least.

Still, Steve isn't really sure what to expect next. Billy's still aggressive, still generally a dick, but he only ever gets hands on when they're on the court. Steve isn't sure if this is the new normal, if Billy has finally gotten the picture and backed off, or if he should be bracing himself.

He usually tries to ignore it. Grit his teeth and get through the uncertainty that clings to him, at least until practice is done and he can go home.

Today, though, Steve is already on edge. He'd not gotten much sleep the night before-- too many bad dreams, too hot under his blankets, and then too cold without them-- and he's waspish and one push shy of snapping. He can't focus-- not on class, not on conversation, and certainly not on basketball. Especially not with his limbs feeling too heavy, with his bones aching, like he's coming down with something.

So, when one of the JV kids plows into him, knocking him off his feet, Steve hits the floor with a grunt and then just-- doesn't get back up.

He lays there, on the laquered wood, staring up at the vaulted ceiling. He lays there, feeling itchy and irritated. He lays there, face red and sweating too much, and *snarls* at the first person to approach him.

Of course, it just happens to be Billy.

"Hargrove," the coach calls. "Get him to the nurse's or something, for christ's sake."

"Sure thing, coach." Billy says, but his eyes are narrowed on Steve, his head cocked a little, and he offers a hand. "C'mon, pretty boy."

Steve smacks it away before he can help himself. "Don't fucking touch me."

God , does he not want to be touched right now. He doesn't know why, but just the thought of anyone outside of maybe Nancy, or Jonathan, or El, or Dustin putting their hands on him makes his skin crawl.

Jesus, there's something wrong with him.

Shoving to his feet on wobbly legs, Steve shoves by Billy and trudges toward the locker room door. He hears the squeal of sneakers as Billy turns to follow.

He at least makes it to the locker room before this awful crawling sensation overwhelms him. He'd felt it, all night last night, and a bit throughout today, and it's driving him *crazy* . He grinds his back molars through it, closes his eyes, and fumbles with the lock on his locker door.

There's zero warning before Steve is being pressed, shoved against the locker by the hard line of another body. Cold metal against his cheek, warm heat against his back.

It doesn't come as a surprise when Billy Hargrove's voice is in his ear.

"Looks like you're having a little trouble there, Harrington." His voice is rough and deeper than normal. And he's panting, too.

Steve bares his teeth, tries to bring an elbow back, and he feels so ridiculously *threatened* right now, with Billy pressed against him. Feels like he needs to bolt, right out the door, and he's too fucking *hot* -- his head too dizzy and heavy to be much use.

Billy catches his arm, huffs out a laugh, and his hand feels *scalding* against Steve's skin. Makes him want to just buckle to the floor.

"Billy," Steve says, voice trembling with warning. " *Back off* ."

For a moment, Billy falters. Like he wants to back off, like he's trying to -- but he doesn't. He shakes his head a little, like he's trying to clear it. But instead of backing up, of letting go, he presses forward, going for Steve's neck. Fast.

But he doesn't bite, just breathes in, ragged and rough, tucked up

against Steve’s neck. Steve’s eyes go wide, and he goes very quiet, and very still.

Something winds tight, low and dangerous and new, in Steve's gut as Billy pants against his skin. There's a genuine prickle, a cold slide of *fear* down Steve's spine -- and he doesn't understand that either. Because Steve has never once been *afraid* of Billy Hargrove.

But he realizes, with a sudden clarity, he feels it now. Feels exposed and *hates* it. He couldn't stop the low, rumbling, pitched growl that thrums up from his chest if he'd tried, his nails digging into his own palms, his body pulling taut.

Billy answers back with a growl of his own, but there's no hint of violence in it, no malice.

After a long moment of stillness, Billy moves. But not away. Instead, he just huffs out a breath and *rubs* his face against the sweaty side of Steve's neck.

It takes Steve a second of cloudy thought to realize that Billy is *scent marking* him.

He can feel the rough drag of stubble against his skin. Can feel Billy’s breath, still so hot and heavy against the crook of his neck. Can feel the soft rumble, the roll of his growl, drumming up through his chest where he’s pressed flush with Steve’s back.

It makes Steve go quiet again. Hushes him. Soothes the stirring beneath his own ribcage like a balm against his too flush, too hot, too irritated skin. Makes something *settle* -- and it’s *terrifying* .

“Stop,” Steve breathes, palms pressing to the cool metal of the locker, looking for something to ground himself with because he feels like he’s a second away from shaking apart, and his voice breaks. “Billy, *stop* .”

It takes Billy a beat to actually pull back. And when he does, when Steve meets his eyes, he looks *wrecked* . He's panting heavy and his pupils are blown wide -- he looks utterly ravenous and absolutely unhinged. He's shaking, like it's taking every ounce of control to just

keep himself away from Steve's neck.

Billy *whines* and the sound goes straight to Steve's gut.

“Sorry,” Billy says.

And that's probably the first time Steve has ever heard an apology slip from his lips.

“God, Steve,” Billy says, voice broken, jerking back a bit like he's trying to keep himself from diving back in. “You --” Billy chokes.

He doesn't step back, still caging Steve in. But at least he's not trying to scent Steve any more.

“Jesus, you shouldn't *be* here like this. You should be home.”

“I’m fine,” Steve insists, a little too quickly for his own liking, feeling stupid for wanting-- *needing* to *be fine* , like he’s not feeling heavy and aching and tired like he has a fever building-- and he presses himself more fully to the cold of the lockers. “Why should I be home? What are you even *talking* about?”

Billy whines again, and this time he sounds frustrated. His fingers grip at Steve's sweaty gym shirt. He takes a breath and shudders, full bodied.

“God, you don't even know, do you? The way you smell, Steve,” Billy says, and he looks drunk. Or high. “You're in rut.”

“What?” Steve says, dumb and dull, throat going a bit tight with panic. “No. No, I’m-- I don’t get-- No.”

But it makes sense. He’s got all of the symptoms. The fever, the restlessness, the irritation. The need to not be touched, to have his things be *his* , and the wide berth everyone has been giving him all day.

He’s been walking around school, reeking of the beginnings of his own rut, *all day* .

“Fuck,” Steve hisses, turns his face away and presses his forehead

hard to the slats in the locker door, until they dig in punishingly, and his fingers flex over the metal as he bites back the pure, instinct driven desire to break something in his own simmering frustration. “ *Fuck* .”

He doesn’t know what to do. He’s never had a rut before. He’d grown up on blockers, never had this crawling, raw feeling suffuse through him like this. *He doesn’t know what to do* .

But then he remembers Billy’s words-- *you should be home* -- and he thinks that’s right. That he needs to get out of here, go home, where he’s safe, where he can control everything, where no one can touch him if he doesn’t want them to, where he isn’t teetering on the edge of blind violence and raw self-preservation, where he can’t be *vulnerable* . He should *go home* .

“I need--” his voice cracks again, and his chest is heaving now, his shoulders shaking. “I need to go-- I need to *go* .”

Billy takes one breath, then another, like he's trying to clear his head. Then, he lets go of Steve and steps back.

“I'm taking you home. Come on.”

Billy doesn't touch him. But he does look like he’ll kill anyone who comes near Steve.

“Step to it, Harrington,” Billy says, ushering him toward the locker room door.

Scrambling, Steve rushes to gather his things. He knows he could leave them, forget them, get them when he comes back-- but he *can’t* . He can’t and he feels stupid because he can’t.

He clutches them close to his chest and follows after Billy. He feels stupid about that too, having to be lead somewhere instead of being able to get there himself.

But he follows him. Trails after him, suddenly very aware of his own body and his own scent, and he feels like there are eyes on him everywhere he goes-- through the gym, out to the parking lot, over to their cars. It makes his shoulders pull up, makes his jaw wind tight,

makes him want to snarl at everyone who gets too close.

He feels *so goddamn hot* , even in his shorts and his cotton shirt, in the chilly late winter air.

Then, when Billy stops by the Camaro and rounds the hood to pull open the passenger seat, Steve can't help himself. Can't help the way he snaps, or the shame that follows-- because he's not *like* this.

"I can open my own *fucking* door, asshole. I don't need you to *coddle* me." He's half a second from growling again, before he can stop himself, and then he smacks his own hand over his mouth, eyes going a bit wide.

Billy should look hurt, should look offended, but he doesn't. He just shrugs and gestures at the the door. "Then get in, pretty boy. We don't have all day."

When Steve climbs into the car, Billy shuts the door behind him.

Billy starts the car quickly and has them on the road even quicker. Even though it's cold, Billy rolls the windows down. Steve's not sure if it's for Steve's sake, or his own.

"Have you done this before?" Billy asks, after a while. His eyes are on the road, his hands gripping the wheel tight like he has to think about it, like he needs something to hold onto.

"Done what? Come to school as I'm about to go into rut?" Steve asks, mullish and slumping in the passenger scent, but he tips his head over to the window and closes his eyes, lets the cool air wash over him.

"Gone into rut, dumbass," Billy says. "You were on blockers when we first met."

He at least has the courtesy to not mention that Steve seems to have been blindsided by this. Steve chews on the inside of his cheek, shuddering out a breath before he finally looks at Billy again.

"No," he admits. "No, I've never-- No."

Billy just nods. “It's probably going to be rough. But you'll be fine.”

It takes Steve a second to realize they're already halfway to his house and he hasn't given Billy a single lick of direction. He thinks he should be concerned by that, by the fact that Billy seems to know exactly where he needs to take Steve, but he can’t bring himself to care.

Tentatively, Steve shifts in his seat. “Any advice?”

Billy laughs. And then he swallows.

“Get off. Take a cold shower. Get off again.” He clears his throat. “And again.”

Steve’s mouth goes dry. His eyes go a bit wide. Something hot and wild twists *tight* in his belly.

His face *burns* .

“Oh,” Steve glances away, throat working. “Right. That-- That makes sense.”

“Glamorous, I know.” Billy says. “At least we don't have it as bad as omegas, right?”

When Steve hazards a glance back at Billy, he notices, even in the bad lighting of the car, that Billy is flushed. Ears red, cheeks hot.

“Right,” Steve mutters, though it’s not like he’d know what, beyond the textbook definitions and descriptions, an omega’s heat is like-- nor what to expect from his own rut.

He knows that he’s in the beginning stages. That he can think clearly when he focuses. And that he’s probably *rank* with pheromones, his body trying to attract someone close so that he doesn’t have to spend this time *alone* .

Suddenly, Billy’s flush makes a little more sense. The way he’d crowded him against the lockers, the way he’d tried to bury his face against Steve’s neck-- it all makes sense. Kind of. It shouldn’t attract another alpha, but maybe it’s just threatening. Maybe Billy tried to

scent mark him to cover up Steve's own smell, to keep him from attracting some nearby omega that Billy considers his.

Or maybe Steve is just broken. Maybe his body is doing the wrong thing.

"Shit," Steve breathes, and presses himself back into the corner between the seat and the door. "Am I--? Is it really that strong?"

It takes Billy a moment to respond. Like he has to *think* about it. Steve finds that annoying -- it's all instinct. There's no reason to have to think about fact.

"It's not that bad," Billy says. He breathes in, and Steve knows that even in the windy car, Billy can smell him. "It's fine. It's normal."

Steve shifts, uncertain and unsure. "It is? I don't-- I don't smell *wrong* ? Or-- or bad or something?"

Billy takes a shuddering breath and hazards a glance at Steve. It's quick, like Billy can't look at him for too long.

"No. You smell fine. Normal. Not bad." Billy clenches his jaw and Steve watches the muscles work. " *Fuck* ."

Steve's brows fly up and his lips press thin, and his eyes are still on the arresting way Billy's jaw flexes. "Fuck? Is that-- is that, like, a *jesus, Harrington, you're fine, stop worrying, shut the fuck up* fuck? Or like a *I'm a big fat liar, you don't smell like you're supposed to, insert misogynistic comment about an omega* fuck?"

Billy laughs, because he always laughs. Steve kind of wants to punch the sound right out of his mouth.

"Aggressive much, Harrington?" Billy finally says.

He reaches over and ruffles Steve's hair, because of course he does. Like he just can't keep his hands to himself. Steve smacks him away.

"You smell fine, quit worrying," Billy says. "You smell -- just fucking peachy, alright? If there were any omegas around, they'd be begging you to fuck them right now, alright?"

Steve's nose wrinkles up. The idea doesn't sound appealing at all, but Steve doesn't think he should say that.

But he is curious. At least a little. And Billy's one of the only other alphas Steve knows who doesn't take blockers, and Jonathan isn't here right now.

"Does that--? Is it easier?" Steve asks. "Sharing it? With someone?"

Billy bites back a noise in his throat.

"Yeah," he says, sounding choked. "It is. But it's not impossible to do alone. Not like omegas. It just goes by faster with someone else."

"Faster," Steve repeats, and a nervous laugh bubbles up out of his throat. "How long am I gonna be like this?"

Billy shrugs. "Couple of days, max-- usually. Maybe three, since you were on blockers. Dunno. Never knew an alpha who went off blockers."

" *Three days* ?" Steve slumps back, head lulling back against the headrest, and he covers his face in his hands and *groans* , and the words that follow are muffled against his palms. "This is gonna *suck* . This is *stupid* . All of this is *so stupid* ."

"You'll be fine, alright?" Billy says.

And then they're pulling up in front of Steve's house.

Billy's out of the car before Steve can even notice they're there. Billy throws the passenger door open, despite the fact that Steve *doesn't need help* , and then Billy's all but hauling him out of his car. The windows are still down.

Steve stumbles a bit, as he's pulled from the Camaro, and Billy's hands are firm as they steady him. Steve feels a little light-headed. A little like he wants to hyperventilate and curl in on himself-- because now that he's home, staring at his big, empty house, he still doesn't feel settled or calm or at all like this is where he'll be able to hunker down for three days and ride out his rut.

“I’ll be fine,” he says, to himself mostly, and he’s got a hand to balance himself on Billy’s arm as he starts to really feel the itching, raw panic of *not right, not right, not right* begin to settle into his bones. “Yeah, sure, fine. Just-- three days of being annoyed and angry at nothing and *fucking hot* and, apparently, stupidly horny to get through. Three days. I’ll be fucking fine, right?”

Billy doesn't say anything. He just leads Steve to his door like it's his job, like he's a bouncer escorting Steve out of a club. Distant. Detached.

They get to the door and it's fine. It's all good.

It's when they get inside, after a fumble with keys, that it all goes haywire.

First, Billy looks like he's going to leave, to bolt. But then, shrouded in the covered alcove of Steve's porch, Billy stands too close.

Once the door is open, Billy all but pushes Steve inside and slams the door behind them. He’s suddenly *there,* back up in Steve's space. He's both whining and growling, face at Steve's neck again. He’s breathing hard and heavy, each pant wet against Steve’s skin.

“Fuck, *fuck,* ” Billy pants, and he sounds almost like he's going to *cry*.

Steve doesn’t know what’s happening. How they went from *fine* , to *this* . How Billy managed to get his hands on him so fast-- one fisted into the front of Steve’s shirt, the other on his hip, fingers digging in. How Steve ended up stumbling back, until his back met the wall inside the foyer, or how his own hands ended up pressed but not pushing on Billy’s chest.

Shuddering heavily, Steve lets out a small, unnamable sound from the back of his throat. It makes Billy shuffle in closer, breath in deeper, mouth open like he’s trying to catch Steve’s scent on his tongue.

Steve very nearly tilts his head back. Very nearly offers his throat up to him.

“What--?” Steve swallows; his voice sounds all wrong, all rough, and with the door shut and Billy pressed up against him, he feels that

blistering heat starting back up in him-- lower this time, below his navel and in his gut. “Billy, what are you--?”

Billy’s eyes are dark and hungry. He looks absolutely high. He leans forward, just pressing his weight against the brace of Steve's hands on his chest.

“You smell so *good* ,” Billy says.

Something warm, something *pleased* , spreads up from Steve’s chest and to his head. Makes him feel addled and a bit dreamy. Like maybe none of this is real.

But Billy is still standing there. Still crowding Steve back. Staring at Steve like he wants to eat him whole.

Steve *really* doesn’t know what to do with that.

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“You-- You said I smelled *normal* ,” Steve insists, and he’s still shaking a little, his cheeks and the line of his nose and the tips of his ears all red.

“You do,” Billy says, not liking the way Steve shakes against him, concerned about his own body, worried about if he's *normal* or not.

Billy wants to smooth the concern right out of him. He breathes in again, leaning close, trying to get near Steve's neck again but still held a bit away because of those hands on his chest.

The scent of him has been driving him crazy *all day* . Billy has been fighting himself *all fucking day* .

“You smell like a fire,” Billy says, his nostrils flaring. “Like a warm summer night. Like -- fucking lightning, all fucking electric.”

He whines again, his body protesting that he can't get closer to Steve.

“It's normal,” he insists. “You're perfect,” he says, before he can stop himself.

Steve makes a small sound, his fingers flexing against Billy's chest, the word *perfect* echoing and rattling around in his head. He keeps his palms flat, can feel Billy's heart pound against his touch, the rise and fall of his chest as he breathes Steve in.

But then he gives-- just a little, just a fraction-- his arms bending a bit, softening, and Billy instantly eats up that little bit of space.

Steve's scent is a magical thing. Woodsy and hot and electric, all at once. Billy wants to drown in it, to lose himself forever.

He knows better than to bite. Even now, head all cloudy and dizzy, he knows better. That doesn't stop him from breathing wet and ragged against Steve's skin, from lapping over his pulse point with a dripping tongue. Billy *needs* it. Needs Steve.

It's the smell, he knows, driving him crazy like this. But it's also just *Steve,* and his everything.

Billy's hands find Steve's hips and his fingers dig into flesh, working his way under Steve's gym shirt.

"You're perfect," Billy says again, and he knows he sounds fucking reverent.

It's the praise. It's the hot, wet slide of Billy's tongue over his skin. It's the cool kiss of air on the skin of his abdomen as Billy's fingers ruck up under his shirt.

Steve *groans* . Groans and shudders and goes easy, soft and sweet, between the heat of Billy and the wall behind him.

He doesn't know what's happening. Why Billy keeps scenting him, why he's doing this, when Steve is already home and tucked away from the world.

There's no one here to witness this. No one to smell Billy's scent overwhelming his own. No one Billy needs to prove himself better to. No one but Steve.

But it feels *good* . Steve is hot and itching and hungry, and Billy's mouth feels *good* at his throat. His hands feel good at his hips, his

fingers good on his skin, and Steve feels overwhelmed the same way he felt overwhelmed when he'd put that black wool coat on and smelled the mix of their scents.

"Billy," Steve breathes, fingers flexing out over his chest again, wishing he could feel the smooth warmth of his skin instead of the rough, worn cotton of his shirt-- and he doesn't understand that either. " *Billy* , what are you--?"

Billy has no godforsaken *clue* what he's doing. He's just riding along with instinct at this point. He's drunk on it, on Steve, on the heady feeling of pressing another alpha against a wall.

His teeth graze over skin and he growls, deep and possessive, like there's a need to keep everyone else away from what's his.

Gym clothes do little to his how suddenly aroused he is, how hot he is for Steve, with his body pressed tight against Harrington's. He wants *more* , and so he rocks against Steve, bites down a little harder until Steve makes a noise, a beautiful groan --

-- and Billy stumbles back, pushing himself away. He's panting, eyes dark with pupil.

"I'm sorry," he says, voice rough. "I shouldn't have -- I couldn't -- Fuck, I'm sorry."

Steve blinks at him, a bit slow and a bit lazy. His skin prickles without Billy pressed to him. He feels breathless, and like he won't ever be able to catch his breath, and he braces himself back against the wall as he stares at Billy's red face. At his heaving chest. At the tent in his shorts.

Billy's hard. Billy's hard and he nearly bit Steve. Billy's hard and he thinks Steve smells *perfect* ; thinks *Steve* is perfect-- and that's a heady rush that nearly makes Steve buckle as he wets his lips and realizes he's gotten half hard, too.

As he clears his throat and realizes that, maybe, he's gotten a few of his wires crossed.

He drags his gaze back up, sees the red tips of Billy's ears and the

wide darkness of his eyes, and doesn’t know what he should do. He only knows what he *wants* to do.

It takes one short stride, a single step, to get back in Billy’s space. A moment to catch him by the shirt front and reel him in close. A second to lean in and slant his lips over Billy's.

Billy groans. He stiffens for a moment, then he yields, completely and utterly, to Steve’s advances. He thinks, *finally* , and folds into Steve’s embrace and his hold. His arms wrap around Steve, and his mouth opens. And Billy just goes *pliant* . Easy.

He kisses Steve back without thinking, because it’s just what he wants. Finally, finally, Billy gets everything he’s ever asked for.

Billy gets his fingers in Steve’s hair before he can even think about it. Before he can think better of something so intimate. “Fuck,” he groans, against Steve’s lips, breath going ragged.

One kiss leads to another, leads to another, leads to another. Steve is clutching Billy close by the shirt front, arching against him as Billy drapes a heavy arm around his waist to pull him closer. Steve licks his way into Billy's mouth, and Billy moans. Billy drags his nails along Steve's scalp and Steve *whines.*

Steve is dizzy with it. With Billy's hands on him, with his teeth at his lower lip, with the *sounds* he makes. He doesn't think he should be doing this. Doesn't think he should *want* this --

But he does. *God,* he does. He's hungry for it; ravenous for the burn of Billy's hands on his skin, for the way he can taste Billy's groan on his tongue, for the heavy rush of blood in his veins.

He hears Billy hiss as their hips meet. Hears him mumble another *fuck* against Steve's lips. And Steve is *aching* for it.

“Yeah,” he breathes, between one kiss and the next, hands smoothing down the ripple of muscle he can feel beneath cotton, and tugging at Billy's shirt. “ *Yeah* .”

Billy can’t -- he can’t deal. His head is swimming, his blood is boiling. He wants to crawl inside Steve’s skin, wants to kiss him for forever.

It’s when Billy’s shirt actually comes off, aided by Steve’s needy hands, that the atmosphere in the room shifts. His skin is slick with sweat and his chest is rising and falling quickly, panting like a racehorse.

Immediately, Billy steps away. He looks -- well, he looks fucking panicked.

No matter how much he wants to kiss Steve, he can’t. He *can’t.*

“ *Steve* ,” Billy says. And he sounds *gone* . He feels gone, too. “ *Stop* . I can’t. You can’t.” God, he can’t even *believe* he’s saying this, that he’s stopping the very thing he wants so badly.

But he’s not going to drag Steve into this with him.

Steve stares at him with dark eyes, his pupils consuming any color there. His mouth is red, lips swollen. His hair is a mess from where Billy sank his fingers into it.

He stares at Billy for a long moment. Though his eyes never stay in one spot too long.

Steve's palms itch to reach out. To touch all of that skin. To feel the way the muscle flexes and works beneath it.

“Why not?” he asks when he finally meets Billy's gaze again.

“Because you’re not *you* right now. Your body is a mess or hormones and you -- you aren’t thinking clearly.” Billy swallows.

And god, he *wants* .

There’s every possibility that Steve will regret this. And maybe months ago, Billy would’ve accepted that. But now? Now, he can’t even deal with that thought.

Steve's eyes narrow. “You think I don't know what I want?”

“I think you know what you want *right now* ,” Billy says.

Billy’s muscles tighten and his arms cross -- protecting himself a bit.

Trying not to fight, even though he *wants* to.

Steve feels a *rush* of irritation wash through him, too cold and needling down his spine. He takes a step closer, stands a bit taller, and his chin tips up, just slightly, baring his throat a bit in a move of raw defiance.

“What do I want, then, Billy?” he asks. “When it's not *right now* ? What do I want?”

Billy can’t help it. He stands up a little taller, but even then, he’s still not as tall as Steve. And *that’s* a rush, somehow. It makes his heart pound faster, for a fight -- for something.

“I don’t *know* ,” he finds himself growling. Because it’s true. He has no fucking idea what Steve wants. “But you don’t fucking want *this* .”

And that’s the kicker. And Steve *just won’t fucking listen* -- he’s too consumed by hormones, by his rut. He’ll regret this. He *will* . And Billy will be left feeling guilty and terrible. So, maybe he gets a bit mean, a bit heated.

It’s the only way Steve will hear him. Will get his eyes off the prize.

“Jesus Christ, what, did you take all that simpering omega shit to heart? You that desperate for a knot?”

Steve winces back. The sudden harshness stings.

He wonders where the other Billy went. The one that put his face so carefully at Steve's neck to just breathe, not even to bite and make Steve submit. The one that called Steve *perfect* and meant it.

That man seems to have disappeared beneath the brittle, posturing alpha in front of him.

“ *God* ,” Steve huffs out a sharp laugh, crouches, and plucks up Billy's shirt from the ground. “Get out.”

He shoves Billy's shirt against his bare chest. Pushes. Steps away.

“I don't think I need to show you the door,” Steve says, but gestures

to it anyway, and then turns his back and walks away.

“No,” Billy says, clenching his teeth. “No, you don’t.”

He shrugs his way back into his sweaty gym shirt, trying to bite back the pain in his chest. The regret. He doesn’t like this one fucking bit, but it’s better than the pain that would hit both of them, afterward. It’s better than the goddamn guilt of taking advantage.

“Enjoy your rut,” Billy says to Steve’s retreating back, and then closes Harrington’s door behind him.

5. it's strange what desire

Summary for the Chapter:

> WARNING: mentions of vague past dubcon; dumb boys being dumb boys; it's a date and you're both idiots; Billy Hargrove peacocking and being Aggressive; Steve being kinda turned on by it, maybe, just a little

“Hey, cool it, man!” Tommy shouts, after Billy shoves him into a locker on his way out of the locker room.

Practice had been brutal. It’s the fifth practice in a row Harrington’s missed and Billy had finally come out and asked the coach what was up with that, with their forward’s mysterious disappearance.

Turns out, Harrington quit.

Of course he did, that little *bitch* . Because he always runs away when the going gets tough. Because Billy had to lose the *one time* he had with Harrington.

Because Billy fucked it all up.

“Fuck off,” Billy says, and slams his way out of the locker room. His hair is still partially wet and he’s itching for a smoke. He can’t get outside of the building fast enough.

Billy’s halfway through the first drag of his cigarette when he notices a familiar silhouette by the parking lot. *Harrington* . Speak of the goddamn devil.

Billy is striding over before he can think better of it, fueled by adrenaline and anger and frustration. It’s been two weeks since he’s spoken to Steve, and even then, Billy’s only seen the guy a few times outside of practice. There’s no doubt about it: Steve is avoiding him.

“King Steve!” Billy shouts, taking a long drag of his cigarette as he approaches.

Billy can see it, the way Steve goes suddenly rigid. The way he stands a little taller.

But when he turns to face him, books in his folded arms, he blinks like he's bored. “Can I help you?”

“You quit basketball,” Billy says. And it’s obvious where he’s just come from. He smells like the school’s soap and like the locker room, still. “What the fuck, Harrington?”

“I quit,” Steve shrugs a shoulder. “Not much else to it.”

Billy grits his teeth and keeps advancing forward, until he’s only a few feet away from Steve. In swinging distance, for all that it matters.

“How was your rut?” All grins, like it’s the easiest question in the world, not the absolute non-sequitur that it is.

The smile Steve replies with is like glass. Pretty and pleasant as it is sharp and cold and ready to cut.

“You'd know if you'd stuck around,” Steve says. “If that's all?”

Billy’s not the type to let other people hurt him, to let them get under his skin. So why the fuck do Steve’s words, his smile, bother him so much? Billy knows that, for once in his goddamn life, he did the right thing. The solidly moral thing.

So why isn’t it paying off? Why does it hurt so fucking bad?

He couldn’t have done that to Steve, couldn’t have left him reeling afterward, hurt and alone and confused. He couldn’t have let Steve *regret* it.

And so, Billy laughs. Because that’s easier, because it’s kind of funny, if he thinks about it. For once, he didn’t fuck up -- and yet, he still did.

“Jesus Christ, Harrington. Get your goddamn head together,” Billy says. He leans forward and drops his tone, concerned about prying ears. “You didn’t *want* me to stick around.”

“Huh. That’s funny.” Steve says, and his expression is a mockery of consideration, brows drawing together and head cocking. “I seem to remember me wanting you there was the *problem* . Like some stupid, swooning omega desperate for a knot, right?”

And maybe Billy feels a little stupid because of that, a little burned by the tone. But he can't help his stupid fucking desire to want to protect Steve, to want him to be safe and happy. Even if he keeps going about it all wrong.

If he wasn't so fucked up and turned around, he would've just gotten off with Steve no problem, no strings, no hard feelings.

Billy snarls. “You weren't thinking straight, you fucking *dumbass* . You would've regretted it. I would've --” *taken advantage* , Billy doesn't say.

“You would've, what?” And Steve's careful facade finally cracks a little; Billy can hear it, in the clip of his words. “Regretted it, too? Looked back and thought *ah, geez, I really made a mistake fucking around with Harrington even though I clearly want him and he's clearly giving me an invitation?* Or did you just realize that you were all bark and no bite?”

Billy wants nothing more than to just surge forward and catch Steve's lips with his own. But they're in the middle of the school parking lot. In broad daylight. It's impossible.

“I would've been taking advantage,” is all Billy says. Simple. Succinct.

Steve's entire countenance shifts. The hard edges disappear. The fake politeness.

He blinks, takes a step back, and clutches his things close.

“What?”

Billy takes another step forward, but for once it's not predatory. It's cautious. And his voice drops, like he's trying to keep a secret. He's *nervous* and he knows it shows.

“You were out of your fucking mind, Harrington. It would've been taking advantage.”

It's not something that's talked about, much. It's usually waved away with a shrug and a laugh. There's no taking advantage of omegas in heat or alphas in rut -- they always enjoy themselves. Biology helps with that. It's just *fact* .

Billy knows that's bullshit. From first hand experience. And he'd never fucking do that to Steve.

So he clenches his teeth and leans closer and very nearly snarls, but it's not mean, not necessarily. “I would *never* .”

“But you wouldn't have been --”

Steve stops himself. Cuts himself off with a little click of his teeth as his mouth snaps shut.

He regards Billy for a quiet moment, shifting on his feet. He's looking at Billy, but his eyes are a little unfocused, like he's thinking back on something.

Or, judging by the faint flush that burns its way to his cheeks, maybe remembering something. And *god* , Billy would kill to know what.

“Oh,” Steve breathes, soft and quiet, and then his expression goes gentle with understanding. “Thank you, then. For not taking advantage.”

It's just a second, just a moment, where everything might be fine. Then, Steve purses his lips at him again and steps away.

“But you didn't have to be a total dick about it,” he says.

Billy just raises his eyebrows. “Yeah, because you were really capable of rational thought.”

He doesn't say *I tried to stop* , because he doesn't want Steve to feel guilty. Or like he owes Billy something-- as much as some part of himself thinks he *should* , thinks he could *use that* -- but he doesn’t. He doesn't want to give him the wrong impression. Not that he

needs the *right* one either. Neither are great.

And Steve-- Steve *rolls his eyes* . "You could've explained it. You know, like a normal person, with actual words. Instead of a whole lot of *I can't* or *you can't* or *you'll regret it* , as if you know me enough to know what I will and won't regret."

He glances around them, and then shuffles in closer, until they're nearly touching. His voice drops and his face is warm with a blush again.

The wind cuts cool between them, just enough to ruffle Steve's hair. Just enough for Steve's scent to catch on it, warm and woody and just like Billy remembered-- though, there's an acidic tang of what might be embarrassment there, too.

"It was my first rut, Billy." Steve mutters. "I was-- Inexperience and comprehension are two different things. If you had just tried to *explain it* , instead of-- of *insulting* me, like usual, I wouldn't have--"

Steve cuts himself off again. His lips press thin and his eyes hunt over Billy's face before he sighs and steps back.

"But thanks," Steve says again. "For not… you know."

Billy wants to reach out, to prevent Steve from going. But he doesn't. He just nods. Because -- he's glad that Steve is grateful, and no longer angry. Because there's something like hope in his chest, knowing that Steve isn't ashamed of having kissed Billy in the haze of his rut.

It's probably that same hope that makes him open his mouth again.

"For the record, Harrington... I wasn't thinking too clearly either. I don't think I really," he swallows and remembers the smell of Steve, the headiness of it, "was capable of *explaining* anything."

Steve blinks at him. And then he's ducking his head, clearing his throat-- but Billy can see it. The grin on Steve's face. Lopsided and pleased and *lovely* .

"Good to know you weren't just exaggerating, then." He clears his

throat again before schooling his face and meeting Billy's eyes through the mess of his fringe. " *Perfect* , right?"

Billy's tongue feels big and useless in his mouth. His throat works.

He doesn't even get a chance to reply.

"Have a good afternoon, Billy." Steve says, something a little bright and a little knowing in his eyes as he lets them stray down over Billy, already turning away. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Billy stands there, watching him go. He doesn't exactly know what that look meant, but it doesn't stop the way something warm and fluttering *thuds* heavy and wild in his chest.

Steve's already gone by the time he realizes he didn't get a chance to ask if Steve would join the basketball team again.

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Steve doesn't re-join the basketball team.

When Billy asks him about it three days later, standing at what Steve can only describe as a *careful* distance away from Steve and his locker, like he always seems to do these days, Steve just snorts and glances over his shoulder at him. "I didn't quit because of you."

Billy's brows arch up, and Steve colors a bit, turning back to his locker.

"Well," he says. "Not *just* because of you."

While a big motivator *had* been avoiding Billy after the mess that happened before his rut, it wasn't Steve's only reason. When he'd first started playing, it was because his dad hadn't approved of him *wasting time* on the club swimteam one town over. He'd been pretty decent at it, and it got his dad off his back, so he'd stuck with it.

But Steve isn't delusional. He's not a great player-- he's not even really a *good* player. Billy is proof of that enough. It's not going to help him get into college, and his dad is so frequently and increasingly gone that he wouldn't have noticed if Steve had quit the

year before.

He'd be lying, though, if he tried to say it wasn't because of Billy *at all* . It had just been the last straw.

Steve hadn't wanted to face him. Before they'd talked, before Billy had quietly and sincerely confessed *why* he'd stopped after he'd already gotten Steve worked up and hot and aching and then spurned him with cruel and biting words, Steve had been livid. Livid and maybe a bit hurt, too.

Billy was always so cruel. He hadn't wanted to face that cruelty again.

But then Billy had explained why he did it, and Steve had realized he was *right* . Steve hadn't been fully in his right mind. He'd been driven by instinct and need. By a want so strong it had overridden everything else in him.

The things he'd thought about, the way he'd touched himself, at the height of his rut, were proof enough of that.

Steve still thinks he could've gone about it better. Thinks he could've gone about this whole *thing* better-- at least, if Steve is right in thinking that Billy hasn't been posturing to make Steve submit to him. Or, at least, not *just* to make Steve submit to him.

He thinks, instead, that Billy's just been trying to impress him. That he's been doing what any stereotypical alpha would do around a potential mate they were trying to impress. Just-- backwards and too aggressively and all wrong. Which, considering Steve is another alpha, makes a strange kind of sense.

Knowing that, or being a little more than halfway positive about it considering how hard and frantic Billy had been against him in the foyer of Steve's house, makes a lot of Billy's behaviors make more sense. Though, it does nothing to excuse the behavior.

If Billy *does* like him, if he *does* want him, Steve isn't going to make it easy. He's going to have to work for it, just as much as Steve would've made him work for for his bared throat. He's going to have

to prove he's worth the risk of it. Prove that he's not just some alpha hothead following his own knot.

"So, what? You're not coming back?" Billy asks after Steve has shut his locker.

Turning to face him, Steve tilts his head and leans against the cool metal, his jacket slung over his folded arms. "Can you give me a good reason to?"

Billy purses his lips together in careful thought. "Hm. The view? I look great in gym shorts."

He grins, all wide and stupidly charming, and leans casually against the locker next to Steve's, his head resting against it. He's still so carefully far, like he's trying to be weirdly polite. Or respect Steve's boundaries.

It's-- Well, it's kind of stupidly decent of him.

"Nice as *the view* may be, I'm gonna have to still say no." Steve replies, but he has to bite down on the inside of his cheek to keep from grinning back.

Billy huffs.

"I should be *offended* ," but his tone is good, playful still. He leans forward a bit, and says, "But then don't get to see *you* in gym shorts."

And that's -- that's flattering and nice and makes Steve feel way too warm under the soft blue knit of his sweater. His arms wind tighter over his chest, to try and ease the fluttering, unfurling sensation he feels there.

Steve's eyes dart over Billy's face. Hunt for any kind of deception.

Just because he *thinks* he knows what Billy's doing, what he actually wants, doesn't mean he actually *does* . Implications and hushed admissions aside, Billy's not exactly come out and said *I want you* .

"And you *like* seeing me in gym shorts?" Steve asks, sure to keep his tone honestly curious -- and, maybe, just a little coy.

Billy's eyes go a little bright and he makes a big show of dragging his gaze over every inch of Steve's body. Down his torso to his feet and back up again. Lingering. Admiring.

"It's an alright view," he says, finally. But his cheek is dimpling as he grins.

It's more of a compliment than it sounds, coming from Billy Hargrove.

Steve huffs out a little laugh, his gaze dropping to the scuffed toes of his sneakers. He knows his cheeks are probably pink. He can feel the heat in his face.

"I don't think giving you an alright view is as incentivizing as you think," Steve says. "Besides, I've kind of been enjoying the lack of bruises from falling on my ass."

"That's cold, pretty boy. Depriving me of some quality eye candy." He tilts his head. "You could just ask real nice and I'd be gentle."

The tips of Steve's ears go red. But he's looking up, catching Billy's eyes, searching them.

"Would you?" he asks.

And he isn't talking about basketball anymore. Probably never was.

Billy swallows. Steve watches the bob of his adam's apple and the entire hallway goes quiet, out of focus. The world still turns around them, but nothing else seems to matter outside of their small corner of space.

"Yeah," Billy says, eventually. And his voice is quiet, low. Like it's a secret -- hell, maybe it is. "I would."

Steve thinks back, to the day Billy caught him practice bonding with Jonathan under the bleachers. To the day Billy had asked, in no uncertain terms, if Steve would submit to him too if Billy just asked nicely. To Billy's reply when Steve told him *maybe* .

He hums, head tilting as he regards Billy. And there are words, soft

and sweet, on his tongue.

Be gentle with me, Billy. Please.

He doesn't say it.

“I'll keep that in mind,” Steve says, promises, and then tentatively pushes off of his locker. “We should get to class.”

Billy nods, once. It's a sharp movement, like he's not sure what else to say. Like he's a little off-balance, a little taken aback.

But then he throws his arm out, puts a smile on, and says, “After you, Harrington.”

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Billy doesn't know what to do with Steve.

I'll keep that in mind , Steve had said. The words rattle around in Billy's head for at least a week before they start to drive him absolutely crazy. Seeing Steve in the halls, talking to him in passing, hoping and not *knowing* .

It doesn't help that spring is coming quickly on the heels of winter. The days are getting longer, warmer, and Billy's skin is feeling tighter with every passing day. He runs in the mornings, to try and get some of his spare energy out, but it doesn't do much to help.

Without Steve there in basketball, Billy's left feeling stagnant and unchallenged. He's bored.

He wants to claw his way outside of himself, wants to run for miles until he's left ragged and sweaty in the woods. He wants to get into fight after fight after fight.

He needs to do something about it. He knows he does.

That's why Billy slides into the seat next to Harrington in the cafeteria, barging in on Steve's time with Nancy and Jonathan. He doesn't like either of them, but he particularly doesn't like Jonathan -- Jonathan, who'd had his teeth on Steve's neck, all gentle and

controlling. Jonathan, who Steve trusted enough to submit to. Jonathan, who had felt Steve's teeth on his own neck. Just the thought of it makes Billy want to punch the guy in the face and take out a couple of his teeth.

He doesn't do that, though. Instead, Billy just ignores him. And Nancy, too.

It's not hard. It's so easy to pretend that Steve is the only person who exists in the cafeteria, like there's no one else around at all.

"King Steve," Billy says, straddling the bench at the table, legs splayed and open in Steve's direction. "How's it hanging?"

He's all grins. That charming one he knows makes girls weak.

Steve just blinks at him, like he's surprised Billy is there at all. But he twists in his seat to face him, a curious line between his brows, and he doesn't *look* like he doesn't want Billy there.

It's a look Steve's been wearing a lot around Billy. Like he's not really sure what to do with him. With the distance Billy's been keeping and the way he's been a little kinder, a little more subtle in his interest-- or, at least, not trying to lick his way into winning Steve over. Like Steve's not sure if he should let Billy keep making a fool out of himself, trying to win over another alpha this way, or if he should take off running in the opposite direction.

"Well, it's Wednesday, and they're serving mystery meat again," Steve shrugs a shoulder. "So, you know, not great. You?"

Billy laughs, and ignores Nancy and Jonathan, who he can see out of the corner of his eye looking at each other, and then at Steve, confused as to why Billy is here.

"There's a party on Friday, at Paul's," is all he says.

Steve's brow arches. "Is that an invitation?"

Billy clenches his teeth for a second, then releases them. "Obviously."

The last thing he wants is to sound desperate.

But then Steve is smiling. Soft and small, but so sweetly genuine. Billy *likes it* when Steve smiles at him.

Jesus , he's so fucking screwed.

"Sounds like a good time," Steve says. "I guess I'll see you there?"

Billy can't help but mirror that smile. He knows he is, and he's trying to bite back most of it, but he probably fails. Whatever.

"See ya there, Harrington."

As Billy's walking away, he realizes he feels calmer than he has in days.

-*-

In retrospect, Steve probably takes way too long trying to figure out what to wear to a stupid house party. He goes through half a dozen different pairs of jeans, one too-preppy shirt right after another, and eventually settles on a dark button-up he hasn't worn since he was fourteen and that's *maybe* too tight, with a pair of dark wash jeans his mother had insisted made his ass look *shapely* .

And Steve kind of wants to look good tonight. Kind of wants to look good enough for someone to want to sink their teeth into him.

Kind of. Maybe.

He knows that it's a little crazy. That not two months ago he would have been happy-- *elated* , even-- for Billy to just leave him be.

Jonathan and Nancy voiced that same concern, after Billy had left their lunch table on Wednesday. But Steve hadn't known how to tell them that he doesn't mind it so much, anymore. That it's kind of thrilling, knowing that Billy is chasing him all the time because he *wants him* . That he kind of *wants* to be chased-- especially now that Billy's brittle, hard edges have softened some with understanding.

That he kind of wants that earnest, hungry, but *kind* alpha that had

been *worried about taking advantage* that Steve met in his foyer. The one that's been carefully edging around him for weeks, *waiting* . That he wants to be brought to his knees by that alpha. That he wants to bring that alpha to his knees in return.

So, he dresses up a little. Runs his fingers through his hair until it's perfectly messy. And then heads out for a house party he wouldn't otherwise give two shits about.

When he gets there, everything is in full swing. He walks in and there's instantly a cup pushed into his hands and a girl on his arm, batting her lashes up at him and running a hand over Steve's chest telling him that he *cleans up nice* .

Steve takes the complement and the cup, and slides away into the mess of sweaty teenagers dancing a wreck into poor Paul Bernard's living room.

It doesn't take long at all for Billy to find him.

Billy's smell is everywhere, like he's been prowling the house for hours -- and maybe he has. It's almost a surprise, though, when Steve feels a hand at his hip and a breath hot on his neck as Billy comes up behind him and speaks directly into his ear.

"You made it," Billy sounds warm and pleased and maybe a little drunk already.

Steve shudders. Has to sip his drink to keep from saying something too eager.

But he doesn't pull away. Doesn't shy from the hand on his hip or the heat pressed half along his back.

"Did I miss anything?" Steve asks, when he finally turns his head to meet his eyes.

Billy just shakes his head, eyes bright. "Nah. I got a handful of numbers, though."

He digs his hand through his pocket and pulls out a wad of crumpled papers. He clenches his fist, then drops it all to the ground in favor

of plucking Steve's cup right out of his hands to take a sip.

Steve watches him tip it back, watches his throat work as he swallows, and feels a low heat wash through him. He clears his throat and glances away, down at the wrinkled notes, the torn shreds of paper with looping numbers and names. He toes at them, and bites his lower lip into his mouth to keep his grin from turning into a stupid, dopey smile.

“You’re a heartbreaker,” Steve says, when he looks back up, and he slides the cup back out of Billy’s grip so he can take a swig too.

Billy just shrugs. “They're barking up the wrong tree. Ain't my fault.”

Billy watches Steve for a moment, then reaches for the cup again. He curls his fingers over Steve's for a moment before stealing the cup back.

“You're almost out of booze, pretty boy. Should we get you some more?”

“I guess that depends,” Steve hooks his finger into the top lip of the cup, tips it over to see the last dregs of whatever mad concoction his peers have cooked up this time at the bottom. “Are you gonna drink all of mine again, or get your own?”

Billy makes a sound in his throat. It's barely audible over the music, but Steve hears it, and he *sees* it too -- in the way Billy's eyes go dark, in the way his mouth opens a little in wet pant.

“Pretty sure yours tastes better,” he says. “And maybe I'm real thirsty.”

He *looks it* , too.

Something in Steve’s chest turns over. Something warm and fluttering; it makes Steve shiver.

He twists in Billy’s hold, until his shoulder is tucked against Billy’s and Steve is practically flush with his side. Eyes locked with Billy’s, Steve takes the cup back and swallows down the rest of his drink. He

licks the heat of what might be gin from his lips, and then gestures with a swing of his head toward the kitchen.

“Let’s get a drink, then.” Steve says.

Billy leads him to the kitchen, where it's even louder, even more chaotic. Everyone moves out of the way for Billy, though, who beelines toward the punch with intent. He fills a cup to almost overflowing, takes a long sip, licks the rim, and then hands it back to Steve.

“Only the best for the king.”

Steve takes it. Even without the kick of booze, Steve’s neck feels warm.

He blames Billy. Billy and his open shirt and his tight jeans and the ridiculous, subtle posturing he’s doing right now. The hand that finds his hip, the way he stands as close as he can get, the fact that he got Steve’s drink *for him* and then made a show of it.

Steve feels sort of ridiculous, getting all flustered just because Billy is, in a way, *doting* . But he can’t help the pleased, tingling warmth that spreads through is chest.

“Thanks,” Steve says, after taking a drink.

“Anytime,” Billy says, and sounds like he means it.

Hand still on Steve's hip, Billy guides them out of the kitchen. There's something interesting about Billy's posture, like it's a little too tight, despite how attentive he's being. Steve imagines it's all the eyes around them, the people that might look a little too hard at Billy acting like Steve's his omega -- because that's kind of what he's doing, isn't he? Before Steve knew better, he thought it was clear Billy was just trying to be the bigger alpha. But now that he looks closely, that's not it at all. But that sort of thing isn't -- well, it's not *usual* .

So clearly Billy's putting in a bit of an effort to hide it. To veil it all under something more mundane.

They find a bit of quiet in a nook of a hallway by the formal dining

room. Billy leans against the wall, all long lines and the sort of warm friendliness that comes with being drunk.

Steve takes the time, the privacy they're suddenly awarded, to admire him a bit. Steve isn't sure if Billy takes the same time and care in his appearance that Steve does, but he thinks those might be Billy's *nice* jeans. They're just as tight as all of his others, but they're black and there isn't a single hole. He's got one of those snap button shirts on, and it's undone to the navel, showing off his broad chest and his tan skin, and Steve's hands itch a little.

He still hasn't quite gotten his hands on him the way he had wanted to back during his rut.

When he finally looks back up, Billy is grinning at him, lazy and lopsided and so *pleased* . It's honestly bordering on smug.

Steve can't help the way the back of his neck goes red and he clears his throat, arms crossing over his chest, his drink dangling from his fingertips as he glances away. "So," Steve says. "What do you usually get up to at parties like this when you aren't busy beating my keg stand record?"

Billy raises his eyebrows. "You really wanna know?"

When Steve nods, he continues, leaning into Steve's space a little. Close enough that Steve can feel the heat radiating off of him.

"I find a quiet corner to make out in. Or not so quiet, sometimes."

"Oh?" Steve's mouth feels a little dry, so he brings his cup up and takes a long drink.

He can't help but think about it. Billy crowding some girl back into one of the dark corners of the house. Billy putting his hands all over them, kissing them breathless and stupid, and loving every moment of it. For the pleasure of it. For the attention.

He can't help but think about what Billy's mouth felt like against his.

"I'd hate to keep you from such a treasured passtime," Steve says, sipping at his drink.

Billy looks not at all kept from anything. His attention is keen on Steve, unwavering. He leans forward, wraps his hand around Steve's on the cup, and tips it toward his lips and takes a long sip.

“Trust me, I'm where I want to be.”

Steve lips part on a sharp little breath. He wants nothing more than to lean in, to chase the taste of liquor into Billy’s mouth.

He doesn’t know if he’s allowed to, though. Not here, where anyone could walk by.

Still, he *wants* . Feels the hunger in his belly, for Billy’s mouth hot and sweet against his own. So, he leans against the wall next to Billy, weight braced against his shoulder, and asks.

“Are you going to kiss *me* , then?”

Billy’s eyes go dark. His fingers tighten over Steve’s, and he moves as if he’s going to lean in, to do just that--

“Hargrove, man,” Tommy’s voice cuts through, and Steve cringes back as Billy’s hand drops away from his own, and he hides his own frown in his cup, swallowing back a big drink as Tommy sidles up to the both of them. “They got a fresh keg out back.”

Billy doesn't look pleased. If Tommy had any sense, he'd leave Billy alone when his eyes are narrowed like that.

“Fuck off,” Billy says. Ever friendly. “Not in the mood for keg stands tonight.”

“C’mon, man.” Tommy scoffs out a laugh, his eyes flitting to Steve and narrowing. “It’ll be a hell of a lot more fun than hanging back here with Harrington.”

Steve’s smile is tight when he gives it. “Nice to see you, too, Tommy.”

Tommy’s nose wrinkles up. “Eat dick, Steve.”

Steve bites down onto his tongue. He’s not going to let Tommy ruin

his good mood. Or, at least, he's going to try.

Billy growls. Steve can hear it, low and menacing. There's threat of immediate violence there; Steve can sense it.

Billy is up in Tommy's face before Steve can even blink. "Apologize," Billy snarls, tone sharp and jagged.

Tommy's eyes go wide; owlish. He blinks up at Billy and falters back, jerky and unsure. " *What* ?"

Steve thinks he should probably stop this or intervene or something. "Billy--"

Billy doesn't let Tommy go far. He gets him by the shirt and hauls him back with one hand. With the other, he gets Tommy by the chin and turns his head so he has no other choice but to look at Steve.

"Did I stutter?" Billy asks. "Now, Harrington here is my friend, and you just sounded awful unfriendly to him. So I'm gonna need you to apologize. Understand?"

Tommy goes red in the face, in the ears, but he doesn't struggle. Not an inch.

"Sorry, Steve." He says, though he looks like the words taste sour in his mouth.

But Steve's not really focusing on him. He's a little too busy staring at Billy. A little too busy being totally and completely stunned by him.

"It's fine," Steve mutters, eyes on Billy's face.

"It's not fine," Billy says. *"Tommy* here needs to get over himself and his fucking hate-boner for you."

And it's true. Tommy has been giving Steve shit for a year now, but Steve had just let it go. Figured it wasn't worth bothering with.

"Now, say sorry like you *mean it* ," Billy growls, grip tightening on Tommy's chin.

" *Ah,* jesus *christ* , Billy. I'm *sorry* , okay? I'm fucking sorry." Tommy winces, squirms as if to get away, and Steve steps up and places a careful hand on Billy's arm.

"Billy," Steve says, not quite chiding, but soft. A little coaxing.

It takes a moment for Billy to finally let go. Half of it is probably Steve's hand on Billy's arm, the other half is the way Tommy goes a bit easy in Billy's grip.

Billy lets go and shoves Tommy back. "Now fuck off," Billy says.

The threat in his tone is unspoken. *If you do it again, I'll hurt you.* Even Tommy's dumb enough to hear it, and so he goes. Fast.

When Steve looks back at Billy, he's breathing hard, eyes still dark. He's gorgeous. His chest rising and falling, his mouth a little open, the blue of his irises fever bright in contrast with his pupils. Violence written in the lines of his body, restrained and pulled taut.

He's fucking breathtaking.

"Thank you," Steve says, when he can finally find his voice again, his hand still on Billy's arm, his drink half-empty and dangling from his fingertips; his face goes a little red when Billy looks at him. "You didn't have to-- No one's ever really--"

You didn't have to do that, I can take care of myself. No one's ever really defended me like that, I'm supposed to be able to take care of it myself.

There's something like understanding on Billy's face.

"Um," Steve's throat works. "Thank you."

Billy snatches the drink out of Steve's hand, takes a sip, and then hands it back. And then he's dragging Steve by the arm, down the hallway, up the stairs, and to a random fucking room -- which turns out to be a guest bath.

There's no warning.

Billy just shuts the door behind them and then he's on Steve. Pulling

him close and devouring him in a kiss.

Steve drops the cup. It hits the tile floor with a dull *thunk* and spills out across the carpet in front of the shower. Steve doesn't care.

Because Billy's got his arm around his waist, and a hand pressing between his shoulder blades to keep him close. His mouth is hot as his lips part Steve's, as his tongue dips into his mouth, as he *groans* . Steve's answers it with one of his own, tries to shuffle closer and their knees knock.

He sinks his fingers into Billy's hair. *Pulls* just a little, and ends up pressing forward so much that Billy stumbles back into the bathroom counter, tugging Steve with him.

Billy kisses like he's desperate for it, like he's drowning. Everything about him is intense, hot, unhinged. He steadies a little when he's pressed against the counter, between Steve and cool marble, but only so much. He's a mess of noises, of gasped breaths, of needy touches.

He's much more vocal than Steve ever thought he'd be. In the quiet of the bathroom, music thumping away from a distant room, Billy makes up for the lack of noise. Absolutely unbothered by the sounds coming out of him. There's a growl, low in his throat, when Steve tugs at his hair again, but it's far from dangerous. A noise of absolute delight.

"Fuck," Billy breathes against Steve's lips, and his hands both drop to Steve's belt loops to pull him tight. It's unmistakable how much Billy is enjoying this.

Steve shudders. Their hips meet and Steve *quakes* , gasping against Billy's mouth.

They're both hard in their jeans. Steve can feel the ache of it, can feel the hot press of Billy's length against his own. He wants to to rock against him, rut until the friction rises too high.

" *Billy* ," Steve breathes, pulls away to catch his breath, because he's so goddamn dizzy at the thought, and he feels Billy's lips press to the corner of his mouth.

Billy is fucking panting, hot and heavy in front of him. His eyes are dark and he looks ruined, hair messy and lips red.

“You’re something else, Steve Harrington,” he says.

His eyes drop to Steve’s neck, and he pauses a second, before he speaks.

“Can I?”

Steve hesitates. Hesitates because, as much as he wants it, he’s terrified. Scared of giving over and what that might mean later.

But he stares at Billy’s flush face, at his bright eyes, and hopes he isn’t making a big mistake.

Tilting his head over, letting it lull to the right, Steve bares his neck for Billy Hargrove.

6. will make foolish people do

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNING: explicit content; angst; mentions of what this 'verse would consider homophobia; MASSIVE miscommunication because these two boys are idiots; that sweet, sweet bathroom sex ft. ONE (1) hot beej and a gentle handy
>
> This one's one massive combo POV.
>
> Happy Valentine's Day!

Billy can barely breathe.

For a moment, he pauses, fucking bewildered that Steve is actually giving him this chance. This *gift* .

And so he treats it like the gift that it is. He takes his hand and cups the side of Steve's neck for support, for grounding. He's gentle, reverent as he leans forward and, for a moment, just breathes over Steve's skin.

Then, he lets his mouth close over Steve's neck, teeth pressing down on skin.

Steve's breath catches and then stalls completely. He seizes up, tension rippling through him until he's shaking with it.

It's *nothing* like submitting to Jonathan. Nothing like the practice bonding he'd done, though Billy is just as careful. It leaves Steve's heart pounding, the sound of his own blood ringing in his ears. His hands flutter to Billy's shoulders, and his finger dig in, and he's a fraction of a second from yanking away, pulling back, full-on panicking, his body screaming *no, no, no* --

And then Billy strokes his thumb under Steve's ear. Then Billy lets out a soft *thrum* of sound against Steve's neck, and Steve can feel it rumble up from in his chest and the sound scatters all along Steve's nerves like a soothing, gentle heat.

Steve *whimpers* . Whimpers and slumps into him, his lips parting on his heavy breath, his eyes going hazy. Something weighty and warm settles into the places between his bones, and he goes so weak, so lightheaded, that his knees buckle.

Billy catches him, because of course he does. His arms are warm and solid around Steve, and he pulls him close to his chest, so gentle.

Steve tastes *so good* under Billy's tongue. He's dizzy with it, with the need for more, even though there isn't any more for him to take. There's just Billy biting a little harder, tonguing over Steve's skin a little more. There's just Billy, pulling Steve tighter, closer to him.

Eventually, Billy pulls back, licking over the spot he just bit. The flesh is indented, but not broken. His hand immediately goes to Steve's hair, to soothe, affectionate and kind.

"Thank you," Billy murmurs, because he can.

Steve is panting, open mouthed and soft. He clutches at Billy's shoulders, his head swimming, like his feet have gone out completely from under him.

He can't seem to stop shaking. Little tremors rippling through him, and he has to press his face against Billy's shoulder as he gasps in breath after breath. He feels weightless and entirely too heavy at the same time. Like maybe he should be laying down.

But eventually, after a long moment of nothing but the sound of their breath, of the muffled music from downstairs, Steve finally finds his tongue again.

"You're welcome," he mumbles, but keeps his face hidden.

Steve wasn't like this when Billy had watched him submit to Jonathan.

Mentally, he doesn't know what to do. It's a good thing instinct has him covered. He wraps his arms tight around Steve and just *holds* him. He presses his nose against Steve's hair and hums. His hands rub comforting circles over his back.

“Hey,” he whispers. “You’re okay. You’re good.”

Billy is still panting, still hard, but every inch of him is focused on Steve. On the way little quakes keep shaking up through him as he catches his breath against Billy’s collar. On the way his fingers flex and then curl back into Billy’s shirt.

Face still pressed to Billy’s shoulder, Steve closes his eyes and focuses on the cadence of his breath. His limbs feel heavy, and his lips and fingers and toes are all kind of tingling. Usually, by now, if he hadn’t swam himself back up from the heady rush of submitting, his instincts to protect himself would have kicked in.

But Billy’s arms around him are strong. His scent is heavy and wonderful in Steve’s nose. His hands are big and warm at his back. And Steve feels *safe* .

Completely and totally safe. For the first time since finding out about all of the dark, terrible shit of the Upside Down and the humans who opened the door to it, since facing down a demogorgon with Nancy and Jonathan, since that horrible night back in November, Steve feels safe.

He laughs a little, breathless and kind of giddy, and nuzzles his face deeper into the soft material of Billy’s shirt and the warmth of his smell. “You gonna tell me I’m pretty, next?” he asks, voice a wreck, but tone light.

Billy runs the fingers of his free hand, the one not in Steve’s hair, over the divots in Steve’s neck. Along the redness he left from his teeth. It’s a little possessive and a lot affectionate. He wishes he could press kisses against that spot, too, but it seems like overkill. Like a little *too much* .

He’s not ready to lay all his cards out on the table quite yet. Steve knows that Billy wants him, yes -- but he doesn’t know *how much* or to what extent.

“I could. It wouldn’t be a lie. You’re fucking pretty, Harrington.”

Billy’s fingernails graze over Steve’s scalp, pulling a shiver out of

him.

Steve whines-- he can't help it. Not with Billy holding him. Not with him muttering sweet praise into his ear. Not with him dragging his fingers through Steve's hair. Not with him touching his own mark, temporary as it is, with reverent fingertips.

The sound drags up from the back of his throat, and his fingers flex over Billy's shoulders again. It wouldn't take much to reduce him to a mess, he thinks. Not with the kindness Billy is showering him with.

"You don't have to--" Steve's throat works, and he shifts, carefully resting his chin at the crook of Billy's neck with a soft sigh, catching sight of his pink cheeks in the mirror behind Billy-- and the mess of his hair, and the dark daze in his eyes, and the way his hands are splayed over the broad slope of Billy's back. "You don't actually have to call me pretty, Hargrove."

Steve is so close to Billy's neck. Billy should be on guard, but he's not. Instead, it just makes him shiver in a pleasant sort of way.

"I don't *have* to do anything," Billy says. "But there's things I *want* to do."

He threads his fingers through Steve's hair and coaxes him back gently so that Billy can get a good look at him.

"Like call you pretty," he says. "Because you are."

Steve's face burns.

"Like kiss you," he says, and leans forward and kisses Steve.

Brief. Chaste. Though, he doesn't quite pull away after.

"And kiss you *again,"* he says, and repeats the action, though this time it's far from chaste.

Billy's palm spreads out against Steve's scalp, cupping the back of his head, warm and steadying. He licks into Steve's mouth, greedy and hungry in turns, kissing him like he's *claiming* him.

God. *God* , Billy Hargrove is going to completely ruin him.

Steve moans, breathy and soft, and meets Billy's tongue with his own. It's a lazy, slick side, and Steve arches into it, against Billy, one hand sliding up to curve along Billy's jaw. The other drops to his side, bunching in the fabric over Billy's rib cage.

When they finally part again, Steve panting against Billy's lips, eyes half-lidded and heavy, he revels in the way Billy stays so close. In the way he anchors him with the hand at the back of his head and at the curve of his lower back.

"And what else do you want?" Steve asks.

Billy laughs, a quick huff of a breath, and presses his lips to the corner of Steve's mouth. "Anything you'll give me."

Because *everything* seems like a bit much.

He can't ignore the hard press of his length against Steve's hip -- or the mirroring press of Steve's against him. Billy isn't beneath begging for scraps, but something tells him he won't have to. That Steve is at least down for some of the things Billy has in mind.

So, maybe it doesn't hurt to ask.

"Can I blow you?" Billy asks.

Steve's eyes go wide, his face *burning* , and there's a sharp tug in his gut that gives a vehement *yes, fuck, yes* . He jerks back a little bit, just to get a better look at Billy's face, to try and gauge if he's serious or not.

"You-- You want to?" Steve can't help but ask, but his throat is working and his pupils are blown out wide, and *yeah* , okay, he wants it *bad* .

He wants Billy on his knees for him.

Billy catches him in a long kiss before he pulls back and just *drops* . His knees hit a plush bath mat underneath them and his hands go to Steve's hips.

“Obviously I want to, Harrington,” he says, and he’s already fucking salivating. But he looks up, through those long lashes and says, “But I’m not doing anything until you tell me I can.”

He presses his lips to Steve’s hip, through his jeans. Steve’s hand fly to his shoulders for balance. He’d fall right over if he didn’t. Can’t believe that this is *actually* happening.

“Jesus,” Steve breathes, staring down at him, and his cock *aches* in his pants. “Jesus, yeah, you-- if that’s what you want, I am-- so, *so* okay with that.”

He feels Billy lay another kiss to him through his jeans. A shudder quakes through him.

“But I, uh… I’m not sure how good I’ll be,” Steve mutters with a little frown, cheeks and ears and neck pink. “When I return the favor.”

Billy rolls his eyes, but it’s affectionate.

“I wouldn’t ask if I didn’t want, pretty boy.” And god, he wants *so badly*. “And I don’t care if you’re good. Hell, I don’t even care if you return the favor. I just -- *god,* I gotta get my mouth on you.”

He feels like he’ll die if he doesn’t.

Deft fingers find the button of Steve’s jeans as he pops them open eagerly, pulling the zipper down so that he can slide Steve’s jeans down on his hips to get at the goods underneath. He glances back up at Steve again through his lashes, just checking in, before he pulls his briefs down too.

Billy groans at the sight of him, dizzied by the smell of *Steve* that hits hard once he’s exposed. He leans in for a moment and just buries his face next to Steve’s cock, at the bush of hair that surrounds him. Billy breathes in. Content. Hungry. His hands wrap around to the back of Steve’s thighs and he grips tight, steadying -- both himself, and Steve.

Steve’s fingers shake as he sinks them, tentatively, into Billy’s hair. His heart is hammering in his chest, in his throat, in his temples. He can feel it at his neck too, in the space where Billy bit down, and his

skin prickles with arousal and awareness.

Seeing Billy on his knees for him, feeling his hands big and hot at the backs of his thighs, having his *breath* on his cock is enough to make Steve absolutely weak. The wildest part, though, and perhaps the hottest, is the fact that Billy may be the one on his knees, but Steve has no doubt of who has the power right now.

That might just be the bite talking, though.

" *Jesus* ," Steve hisses as Billy glances back up at him again, and his grin is sharp and hungry and Steve swallows back a whine.

Billy bites back a smile at Steve's curse, and takes that opportunity to take one long lick down Steve's cock before slipping his lips over it. There's no preamble with Billy, no careful, subtle teasing. Just Steve's cock in his mouth, Billy moaning around it like it's the best goddamn thing he's ever tasted -- and he thinks it is.

His head bobs, getting a feel for it, slicking Steve up real nice and good, before he gets into the real rhythm of it. He follows each bob of his head with a swipe of his tongue to the head of Steve's cock, delighting in the way Steve shivers and shakes underneath his hands.

Steve's got a big cock, but Billy's determined and desperate, and he doesn't let that slow him down. Even when he goes too deep, too fast, and chokes a bit, he doesn't ease up -- just works himself until it's easy.

Steve is an absolute mess. He's honestly not sure how he's even on his own two feet anymore. Not with the wet fucking heat of Billy's mouth around his cock. Not with Billy working him over better than anyone ever has before, eager and slick and so goddamn *hot* .

His own panting is loud in his ears. He realizes, distantly, that each time he gasps in a breath, it carries a high noise he's never heard out of his own mouth. He thinks he's probably being *too loud* , especially when Billy takes him deeper, when Billy's cheeks hollow and add to the obscene sight of his lips spread around the girth of Steve's cock.

Fingers curling tighter in Billy's hair, Steve hisses out a curse. And

then another. And then he brings one of his hands up to cover his own mouth, muffling the string of *oh fuck, oh fuck, oh god, Billys* that falls over his tongue.

His hips bucks forward helplessly, once, as pleasure *sears* through him. It burns through his veins, until he can't see anything beyond it, until his vision is hazy and his muscles are stringing taut. As pressure starts to build and build and *build* in his stomach.

And *jesus* , Billy likes the feeling of Steve stuffing his face full. His lips are stretched tight around Steve's cock, just on the edge of painful and it feels so goddamn good.

When Steve bucks, his hands tight in Billy's hair, Billy groans, wet and desperate around him. It should feel like *too much* but it's perfect, this balance of Steve filling him and Billy breaking him to pieces with his mouth.

Steve is louder than Billy ever thought he'd be. Each curse goes straight to Billy's dick, which is hard in his jeans, pressed tight against the zipper. He pants with the desperate need to touch, to palm himself, but he wants his hands on Steve, so he can only squirm and work Steve over harder.

The pressure is too much for Steve. Too tight and too white hot.

His breath pitches higher, until he's whining and tugging at Billy's hair in warning. "Billy-- *Billy* --"

Billy groans, the noise rumbling around Steve's dick. His fingers tighten at the back of Steve's thighs, a silent urging onward. Like hell is Billy going to let Steve come anywhere other than in his mouth. No, Billy wants to drink him down, to feel Steve come down his throat.

So he goes a little faster, a little harder -- because he needs it too, so badly.

Steve *falls* over the edge. Coaxed by Billy's hands, by his mouth, by the damn sounds he makes around him. And he cries out sharply, loudly, and has to slap a hand down onto the countertop behind Billy

to keep himself from crumbling as he spills out, cock twitching and hot, onto Billy's tongue.

It rips through him, orgasm cresting and drowning him in a rush of bliss as his toes curl in his shoes and he clutches at the marble by the sink. His hips stutter, and the pressure doesn't ease until-- embarrassingly-- the base of his dick starts to swell with his knot.

" *Oh, my god* ." Steve gasps out, jaw going tight, body starting to shake, as Billy works him through it until he's twitching and *too sensitive* . "Oh, god, *Billy* ."

Well fuck, Billy thinks. *If that's not the hottest thing I've ever seen.*

He licks Steve's cock and swallows the last of his release down, hungry for it. Billy's heart is pounding in his ears, so hot, so excited, but nearly panicking, too. His hands slide from Steve's thighs to the base of his dick, gripping his knot, feeling it swell underneath his fingers.

"Oh, my god," Billy pants, and his voice sounds wrecked from Steve's dick, dripping with desire and intrigue.

Billy provides just enough pressure on the knot -- he knows what he likes, and can't stop himself from dipping forward to lick at the sensitive head of Steve's length, entranced.

It drags a ragged sound from Steve's throat. He untangles his hand from Billy's hair to smack that one down on the counter too, fingers digging in uselessly against the marble as he squeezes his eyes shut tight.

He's-- He's too sensitive for it. It's too soon off the wake of his orgasm for it. He wants to buckle down to the ground, to beg Billy to stop, but he also never wants it to end. Billy's fingers around him are electric and grounding, and it makes the muscles in Steve's abdomen pull tight as his cock twitches in Billy's grip.

" *Please* ," he hisses, because that's all he can say. "Please, I can't-- just-- *fuck* , Billy."

If Steve was fucking an omega, he'd be buried deep inside their hot

heat. Driving his come deep and filling his mate. So, Billy gives Steve that.

Gently, he slides Steve's dick back into his mouth, his tongue pressing flat against the bottom of it. Warm. Wet. Unmoving.

When Steve is fully seated in Billy's mouth, Billy looks up through his eye lashes and Steve is looking back down at him, eyes wide.

"Holy *shit* ," Steve breathes, voice *gone* .

He reaches, with trembling fingers, down to Billy. Curves over a bit so he can curl his fingers around to Billy's nape, so he can press his thumbs into the hinge of Billy's jaw and ease any tension or ache that might be there.

He wishes he could drag him up, drag him off his cock, and kiss him stupid. But it's exactly what he needs, right now. The heat and the steady pressure around his knot, and Steve wants to *crumble* . Completely and totally, at Billy Hargrove's feet.

He pants through it. Tries to calm his racing heart, sweat cooling on his skin, and as ridiculously embarrassed as he feels for popping his knot during a *blow job* , he's also stupidly grateful for Billy easing him past it.

His knees are shaking by the time his knot finally starts to go back down. It doesn't last too long, maybe a few minutes, but Steve is struck dumb and awed by the care with which Billy pulls back off.

"God. *God* , Billy." And Steve is on his knees the second he can be, dropping onto the floor with Billy and shoving against him, kissing the taste of his own release from Billy's lips, pants undone and half down his thighs, and Steve *doesn't care* .

Billy is glassy eyed and gone by the time Steve drops down and kisses him. It's all he can do just to kiss back, to lick into Steve's mouth like he can barely think. He remembers the feeling of Steve's knot underneath his fingers and he shudders, groaning into Steve's mouth.

Billy falls back on his ass from his knees, uncaring that they're probably bruised. He hauls Steve close, so he's practically in Billy's

lap, just close, like Billy can't fucking get enough of him.

“You're so hot,” Billy manages, mumbling against Steve's lips. “ *So hot.* ”

“ *Me* ?” Steve laughs, between one kiss and the next, his knees on either side of Billy’s thighs, and he dips his hands between them, fingers a shaking mess as he goes for Billy’s fly. “Jesus *christ* , Billy.”

He palms him through his jeans, feels the hot length of him under his fingertips through rough denim, and he makes a needy sound against Billy’s mouth as they kiss, sloppy and wet and heavy.

Billy doesn't say anything. He just makes a low noise in his throat, a fever-drunk rumble. His hips buck against Steve's hand, needy, seeking the friction offered there. The kiss and the weight of Steve on his lap keep him anchored.

But it's not enough. “Please,” he manages, voice broken and god, he looks wrecked. “Please, Steve.” He feels like he's going to die if he doesn't get more friction, more relief.

Steve fumbles with Billy's fly. He feels clumsy, too big for his own skin, like he doesn't know what he's doing.

But Steve wants to give Billy just as much pleasure, just as much care, as Billy had given him.

So, he gets his fly open, drags down the zipper, and dips his hand into Billy's jeans -- shoving them down a little so he can pull Billy's cock free. So he can take him in hand and *stroke* , palm slick with sweat and Billy's precome, Billy's cock heavy and hot in his grip.

Jesus , that's what Billy needed. Steve's hand on his dick, taking care of him, relieving some of the pressure. Billy chokes and leans forward, burying his face in Steve's neck. It was given to him and Billy can't ignore that, can't ignore how much he feels drawn to this part of Steve, can't ignore the pull of it.

He practically fucking whimpers with each stroke of Steve’s fingers, already so embarrassingly close. He muffles his noises in Steve's neck, first just pressing his face against skin, then by getting his teeth

around that warm flesh. Mouthing, biting, sucking.

Billy's hips buck, needy, into each stroke. “Please, please, please,” asking for god even knows what.

If Steve wasn't so completely spent, Billy begging against his throat would be enough to get him hard again. It still makes Steve shake, though. Still makes him answer that pleading with a desperate sound as Billy bites into his neck.

Steve gasps out, arching against him, and his fingers squeeze at the base of Billy's cock before he strokes faster, heavier, slicker over him. As he tries not to squirm and go fucking crazy as Billy keeps working his throat over.

“C'mon,” Steve breathes, tongue feeling heavy as Billy licks over his pulse. “ *C'mon* , Billy. Want you to come for me. Wanna feel it. Wanna taste you.”

Billy’s *gone.* There's no way in hell he can keep himself together by Steve begging him all pretty like that.

Pleasure hits him like a punch to the gut, sudden and earth-shattering and relentless. He bites down and rides it out, hips shuddering against the pull of Steve’s hand, his perfect fingers. Spilling into them, over them, with his release.

For one single solitary moment, pleasure dizzy and punch drunk, Billy feels a wave of panic and fear that he’ll knot. It's stupid and self-deprecating, he knows, for him to think Steve’s knot is hot and his own is embarrassing and humiliating -- but he can't help it. He fears it'll give him away.

He whimpers and shakes, as the last waves of his orgasm washing over him. When he comes down, when he gets his head together, he realizes he's fine. He just came, that's it.

“Fuck, sorry,” Billy says, mouthing at the spot his teeth bit down against. The skin isn't broken, but it's raw and red.

Steve lets out a little sound, something that’s breathy and not quite a whimper. He turns his face to breathe heavy against the mess of

Billy’s curls. He feels worn out, feels completely wrecked, but Billy isn’t much better beneath him, so he doesn’t feel so bad about it.

It doesn’t keep him from blushing, though. From his head feeling heavy and clouded, from the pulse he can feel where Billy bit his mark into Steve’s neck.

“S’okay,” Steve mutters, giving a little squeeze around Billy’s softening cock, fingers sticky and wet.

Billy curses and shudders, over-sensitive cock throbbing in Steve's hand at the extra pressure from slick fingers. His cock jumps, but he's spent. Exhausted.

Feeling the need for some space, he leans back after a moment, nearly falling until his back collides with the vanity drawers. But he doesn't kick Steve off, just looks at him like he's won the biggest goddamn prize at the boardwalk.

“Well, that was something.” Billy grins, lopsided and loose. He glances down and frowns at Steve’s hand. “Think if we used a towel they’d be mad?”

Steve pulls his hand free with a little wrinkle of his nose. He glances up at the frilly, pink guest towel hanging from the rung by the sink, and makes a small sound at the back of his throat.

“Probably,” he says, and thinks they’ve already made a mess of poor Paul Bernard’s bathroom enough-- so he brings his own hand up to his mouth, a little tentative, and licks Billy’s come from his fingers, some part of himself telling him that he shouldn’t waste it.

Some part of himself saying that he should lick Billy clean. The bite mark on his neck feels hot and tender everytime his heart beats.

Billy can't stop the noise that comes from his throat, can't stifle it. It's embarrassing and low and animalistic. The sight of Steve licking Billy’s come from his fingers is just *too much* , he's fucking mesmerized.

When Steve finishes, Billy doesn't even think twice about catching him in another kiss. Messy, loose, entirely as debauched as Billy feels

right now.

Billy is red in the face when he pulls back, panting. “Jesus, Harrington. You go hard, don't you?”

Steve huffs out a little laugh, and he settles a little above him, ducking his head for another kiss. “Do I?”

Billy probably shouldn't be doing this. Shouldn't be sprawled on the bathroom floor with Steve Harrington straddling him. Shouldn't be licking into another alpha’s mouth. Shouldn't want to do this again and again and again.

“You do,” Billy says, instead of pushing Steve off.

Instead of making the right decision to end this right now. He can still salvage this, he thinks, while letting himself have a few more moments.

“You also look like you just got out of rut,” Billy says, dragging his fingers through Steve's hair.

Steve’s eyes flutter and go heavy lidded. He leans his head back into Billy’s touch, humming.

“Did you mess me up that bad?” he asks, eyes flitting over Billy’s head, as if to check himself in the mirror over the counter, but he can’t quite see it.

Billy admires him for a moment. Not really checking out anything he did to Steve, or the way Steve looks fucked out -- just taking the excuse to truly *look* at him. At his eyes, the angle of his cheeks, the slope of his lips. He's perfect, Billy thinks.

“Maybe a little,” he says.

“Well,” Steve looks back down at him-- at the absolute mess he made of Billy’s hair, the swollen red of his lips, the flush down his tan chest-- and he grins, a little crooked, a little delighted. “You’re not much better.”

Billy swallows and takes a breath. He doesn't *feel* much better. He

feels wrecked and loose and like he's totally *gone* for Steve. And he knows that's true. That he is.

The knock on the door startles them both. They both jump and then the door rattles in the frame, a drunk person pounding against it with their fist.

"Hurry up in there!"

Billy feels his heart jump into his chest.

He makes a face at Steve. Then, shouts: "Hold your fucking horses, someone's getting sick in here!"

He pushes Harrington off his lap and tries to do his clothes back up with shaky hands.

"Splash some water on your face," Billy hisses, and flushes the toilet for the sound.

Steve stares up at him for a second, from the floor where he landed, and something tight settles in around his mouth as he nods and shoves to his feet. He drags his underwear and his pants back up over his hips, does up the fly, and slaps on the faucet. Dipping his hands under the flow of water, he leans over, and splashes it over his face.

He does it again, glancing up at himself in the mirror, and drags his wet fingers through his hair to try and settle it. Make it look a little less like someone else had their fingers in it. He can't help the tight pang of disappointment that follows.

He swallows it down, straightens out, and buttons his shirt up as far as it will go. The collar hides most of the bite, but the material feels *awful* against it, and he winces.

"Well, you certainly look wrecked," Billy says, and his voice is still a little slurred from booze and the high of their climax.

He ducks under Steve's arm like he's holding up a drunk friend, and doesn't even care that his hair looks like shit or that his clothes are disheveled.

“Ready?” he says, looking at Steve, one hand on the door handle.

“Yeah,” Steve leans into him, for effect and because he doesn’t want this to be over yet-- but he feels a dreadful precipice is upon them. “Yeah, I’m good.”

And Billy opens the door. Steve makes a show of stumbling a little, of groaning and pressing a hand to his stomach.

The guy outside looks relieved, doesn’t even pay them much mind, just shoves by and slams the door shut behind him once Steve and Billy are out in the hall.

Billy leads them down the hallway, past drunk party-goers who hopefully didn't hear their noises, and back downstairs. He doesn't slip out from Steve's arm until he leads them outside, where the air is brisk.

His hands shake as he gets his cigarettes out of his pocket.

“Want one?” Billy asks, holding the pack out to Steve.

Rubbing his hands along his arms, Steve shuffles next to him. Shifting his weight between his feet. He looks uncertain. He *feels* uncertain.

“Sure,” he says, but he also remembers the last time he shared a cigarette with Billy and how that had ended.

He realizes, now that Billy has finally gotten what he wanted, he’s waiting for the other shoe to drop. It’s awful. It pits in his stomach, dark and unsettling and churning.

He wonders if this is the moment where Billy hardens again. Becomes cutting and jagged. If Steve should brace himself for that.

Reaching up, he can’t help but tug a little at his collar. The bite is still so sensitive. He touches his fingertips to it, cold from the night air, and makes a little face that he tries to hide by looking down at his shoes.

Billy doesn't know how to read Steve. He doesn't know what Steve's

thinking when he runs his fingers over his neck, when he tugs at his collar. He's probably nervous, anxious that they were so close to being caught. So he just passes over a cigarette and his lighter, once he's lit his own, and hopes that helps.

Reaching for some calm, Billy takes a long drag on his cigarette.

“It doesn't look that bad,” he says, which is a lie. Billy did a number on Steve's neck. “I don't think anyone heard us.”

“What a relief,” Steve mutters, dry and droll, around the filtered end of his cigarette as he places it between his lips, puffing a few times as he lights the end and then holds the lighter back out.

Billy bristles a little at Steve's tone. He still feels off-balance, but he blames the rush of endorphins, the alcohol still in his veins. The nicotine helps steady him, but it can only do so much. Steve is so far now, his warmth just a distant memory.

So he stays quiet. Unsure. Takes the lighter back and doesn’t say a thing. For once in his goddamn life, he’s got *nada* to say.

Steve’s mouth twists up a little as he looks up at Billy, dragging on his cigarette and gesturing to his throat with a hand as he breathes out smoke, and his tone is dry, dry, *dry* . “Would’ve hated to be caught out. You know, considering I let you mark me. On my neck. Where anyone can see it. Was real worried about it.”

Billy clenches his teeth together, jaw working until it hurts.

Steve doesn't understand. And Billy can't stand his tone, all nonchalant and uncaring and -- god, Billy *hates* it.

“You should fucking care,” he snaps out without meaning to, skin bristling with frustration and unease.

Steve bites down on the inside of his cheek and looks away. Out into the street where their cars are lined up, lit in hues of indigo and orange. There’s still music pouring out of the house, but Steve feels like they’re alone, standing out there in the night.

He takes a breath and then takes a drag. When he’s done, he drops

the cigarette to the ground and stamps it out with the toe of his shoe.

“Well,” Steve huffs, stuffing his hands into his pockets so that Billy can’t see them shaking. “I don’t. I wouldn’t have let you if I did.”

When he looks back up, Billy’s staring at him. Steve offers a tight smile, and then shrugs.

“But I guess you finally got what you wanted. So it doesn’t really matter.” Steve says. “No one else needs to know. Just that I yielded, right?”

Billy growls, and the sound is tight and stifled in his throat.

He doesn't like, despite everything, hearing that Steve doesn't care. Like it’s no big deal. Like they aren’t walking through a minefield. And -- Billy can't have it both ways. He knows that. But it still hurts, unbidden and raw.

“That's not --” Billy starts, and his voice sounds pained.

He groans, annoyed, absolutely at a loss for words. That's not what he meant, not what he wanted, not *anything.*

It doesn't really matter , the words echo in Billy’s head, sharp and painful.

“Look, I don't give a shit that you yielded, Harrington.” And that's not quite right, either.

“Then *why* --?” Steve cuts himself off, and he wants to reach out and shake Billy, or hit him, and demand some goddamn answers out of him because Steve doesn’t *understand* this, not any of it, if this was all Billy wanted.

It doesn’t make any *sense* . Billy *wanted* him to yield, to submit, and Steve gave that to him. Billy wanted *Steve* , so Steve gave that too. But Billy obviously doesn’t want anyone to know, despite the fact that Steve will have his mark on him for at least a *week* .

He thinks back, to earlier in the night, to when Billy had dropped all

those numbers at Steve's feet. He thought, at the time, maybe it was Billy saying something like *look at what I could have; I'm choosing you anyway* , but his own words ring in his ears.

You're a heartbreaker , he'd said. And Steve hates to think that he's just lined himself up to be another notch in the post.

So, he steps back, doesn't ask. Accepts it for what it is. That Billy doesn't give a shit.

"Okay," Steve says. "You don't give a shit. You don't want anyone to know. Okay. I get it. That's-- that's fine."

Billy knows he made a misstep somewhere along the line. He feels dizzy and hurt and like he's scrambling for purchase. But he's drunk and he's stupid and Steve just keeps *talking* and his tone hurts and Billy doesn't know what to say.

He can't stop the growl in his throat, the way his shoulders tense.

" *Obviously* I don't want anyone to know. Jesus christ, Harrington, I'm not a fucking idiot."

He throws his cigarette down and stamps his out under his boot.

He doesn't want Steve to leave, but Harrington keeps inching away, anyway.

"Look," Billy says, and takes a step toward him only for Steve to take one step back. "Jesus christ, *stop moving* . It's okay."

Steve laughs. He can't help but laugh, because what else can he do when Billy says something like that?

"No. No, it's not fucking okay." Steve says, shaking his head, and he feels shame bubble up like tar in his chest, and he nearly chokes on it. "I thought you-- fuck, I don't even know what I thought anymore. This is so stupid. This was so *stupid* ."

It's not stupid , Billy wants to say. *It's not, it's not.*

But if Steve thinks it's stupid, Billy can't make him think differently.

So, Billy grits his teeth and says, " *Fine."*

All the fight just drains right out of him with that word, that syllable.

"Fine, it's stupid. It was *stupid,"* he says, and pulls out another cigarette, not bothering to hide how much he's shaking. "But I don't regret it."

"Obviously, you fucking *do* ." Steve snaps, and then he's digging in his pockets for his keys, stepping back again, stepping away. "I thought I was giving you what you-- I thought you *wanted* me."

Steve's throat feels too tight. Because he'd thought Billy wanted this, and Steve *definitely* had-- but he was wrong.

"I should've-- fuck, I should've listened to Nancy and Jonathan." Steve mutters to himself, turning away, *walking* away, because he feels so *stupid* . "I should've fucking *known* better."

I did want you, Billy thinks desperately. *I do want you.*

He opens his mouth to say something, but nothing comes out. He thinks of Nancy and of Jonathan warning Steve away while he watches Steve's retreating back.

Steve nearly makes it to the car before Billy runs after him. He's stumbling a little in his rush, booze and a haze of sex still clinging to him, but he's still fast. He gets Steve by the arm, pulls him away from the car before Steve can get the door open and leave-- before he can leave *Billy.*

"Stop," Billy begs. "Look. Please. Just listen, alright-- will you please listen? And then you can go. I won't stop you."

And Billy-- Billy looks *wrecked.*

That's the only thing that makes Steve pause. That makes him stop.

"What else could you possibly have to say?" Steve asks, and he feels so *ridiculous* , for feeling hurt, and he's stupid and desperate to get away. "What else is there? You don't give a shit, right? About me submitting to you. Do you know how hard that was? And you say

you don’t regret it, what we just did, but you’re *hiding* it-- I mean, what else is there, Billy? Do you just wanna rub it in?”

Billy clenches his teeth and takes a breath, trying to keep his cool. Because he's hurt and frustrated and angry, and the last thing he wants to do is snap. But Steve is making it so hard. So goddamn difficult.

“You don't *get it* , Harrington. You don't get to be nonchalant about this, you don't *get* to not care. What we just did,” Billy hisses, “that wasn't normal. It's *not okay* .”

He takes another breath and lets Steve go, dropping the contact between them. Letting Steve step back.

“People get hurt over that shit. They get *killed* , okay? Alphas don't -- not with *other* alphas. That's just -- the way it is. It's not *natural.”* Billy drags his hands through his hair. “So look -- I don't regret it. I promise you. But people *can't know* .”

Steve stares at him, brows furrowed and hands shaking. It sounds outlandish, the idea that someone would get hurt over for something like that. Steve knows it’s not normal, knows it’s a little unusual, but it’s not-- it’s not completely unheard of.

He knows it wouldn’t be easy. Knows he’d get a lot more comments questioning his status if it came out. But Steve doesn’t *care* . He’s faced worse shit than a little bit of prejudice. It doesn’t scare him.

But it obviously scares Billy.

“Okay. I get it. I get *that* . No one can know.” Steve says. “So what the fuck does that mean? Because I’m having a little trouble figuring out what you *want* , Billy.”

Billy wants so much. He wants everything and anything Steve has to give. But it seems like too much to ask, too heavy.

“You,” he just says.

Steve blinks at him.

“That.” Billy nods at the house, thinking about the bathroom, about the way Steve felt on his tongue, in his mouth, and on his lap. “Again.”

“Me,” Steve repeats back, and his jaw is tight but there’s something weak in the chin and the mouth, and he sucks in a breath through his nose, fingers tightening around his keys until they dig into his palm. “You want me. You want to keep fucking around with me.”

He watches Billy take a step closer. Watches him and can’t help but feel guarded. Like all the work he’d done with Jonathan trusting his instincts and himself were for nothing-- because it’s lead to this.

Because he trusted his instincts to tell him what someone else wanted. And it’s lead to Steve feeling guilty and embarrassed and ashamed.

“Say it,” Steve says-- *demands* , fingers flexing at his sides, one wrong word from just bolting.

For a moment, Billy falters, because he’s not sure how much clearer Steve wants him to be. There’s so many things he wants, but they all revolve around one thing.

“I want you,” Billy says.

Billy doesn’t bridge the gap between them. He’s close enough to touch, but Steve keeps looking like he’s about to shy away, about to run. And -- if he wants to do that, Billy will let him. As much as he *wants* to chase, he doesn’t want to like this. He has to know Steve *gets it* .

His eyes are on Billy’s face, searching, hunting for the lie. He doesn’t find one.

Steve takes one breath. Then another. Then he nods.

“Okay,” Steve says. “You want me. No one can know. So, what does that mean? For you, what does that mean? Do we stop?”

“No,” Billy says. “Or -- I mean, I don’t want to. But if you want to, that’s -- that’s fine. That’s okay.”

At least Billy will be able to say he's kissed Steve. He'll be able to remember the way Steve tastes. And while that's not perfect, it'll be enough, if Steve wants to stop.

Steve nods again. A little slow.

He hates the idea of hiding. Of being some kind of secret. But he'll do it.

"Okay," Steve nods again, arms crossing over his chest. "I don't… I don't want to stop either."

"Okay."

Billy nods, though his eyes are on the way Steve's arms are crossed, the way he looks smaller and defensive. The way he is hunched to protect himself. It's not -- a ringing endorsement, but it's not a *no* either. He wishes it was easier, that it wasn't so complicated. If Steve was an omega, or even a beta, it wouldn't be like this. Hell, Billy could even be something else, too -- he doesn't even *care* .

"You really are the hottest shit I've ever seen," Billy says, a smile sneaking itself onto his face. "Even when you're pissed." He pauses for a second, then tilts his head and *grins* . "Maybe *especially* when you're pissed."

Steve rolls his eyes, but his cheeks go pink. It's stupid how easily Billy can make him feel flattered, feel flustered.

"Shut up," he huffs, glancing away, though he's not sure he means it.

Maybe it's the alcohol, or maybe it's the rush of Steve saying he doesn't want to stop. But Billy looks around, at the lawn devoid of people and the corner Steve is parked in. There's no one around, and they're kind of secluded. He can't help himself -- the bad idea grows roots and takes hold.

Billy takes a step closer and says, "Make me."

Steve finally meets Billy's gaze again. He can feel the warmth of him. Can see the heat in his eyes.

The challenge.

He *shouldn't* . He knows he shouldn't. He knows he should honestly walk away, from Billy and the ruin they'll end up in.

But he wants to feel Billy's mouth on his. At least one more time. Just in case he never gets this again.

He shuffles forward that last step, reaches out and takes the open hems of Billy's shirt in his hands, and leans in. Tilts his head over and catches Billy's mouth with his own.

Billy melts into it. The press of Steve's lips is like a balm on an open wound. He doesn't feel fixed, but he certainly feels less raw, less exposed. It's not quite as heated as some of their earlier kisses, but it's warm and close and affectionate. Billy kisses like he *means it* , like he's staking his claim.

His fingers find the loops on Steve's pants again, but he doesn't yank him close. Just holds him and tugs a little, linking them together at another point.

It's chaste. Steve doesn't let it last too long. Can't let himself drown in Billy again. Not tonight. Not here.

So, he pulls back, smoothing Billy's shirt back down, and offers a tight little smile.

"Goodnight, Billy."

Billy lets out a breath and it's shakier than he'd like. He edges his thumbs out of Steve's belt loops and brushes a finger over his hip, wishing he'd thought to press more kisses there, earlier.

Despite everything, despite Steve saying he doesn't want to stop, there's something about his tone, his posture, that makes Billy think he maybe won't get another chance to do just that.

"Night, Steve."

And then, he lets go.

7. what a wicked thing to say

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNING: boys being ridiculous; alternating pov and combo pov; hot, hot blowies; play chasing; wow these bros are so dumb i love them; feelings but, like, not talking about feelings

On Monday, Billy only catches a glimpse of Steve in the morning.

The day is busy and bright, air laced with the frenetic energy that only early spring holds. Every student seems to be bursting with it, clawing with the need to move, overflowing with the intensity that comes from being cooped up inside all winter long. It's not even all that warm outside, the breeze still bitingly chilly, but everyone seems to be *ready* for spring.

Everyone's dressed like it too, in clothing that welcomes warmer weather, but does little to protect against the chill. Everyone except for Steve Harrington, that is.

When Billy had seen him, only in passing, he'd been wearing the most hideous turtleneck sweater that Billy's ever laid eyes on.

Billy tries to find him at lunch. No such luck.

He has to skip English, one of his favorite classes, to catch Steve by his locker.

"Nice look," Billy says, when Steve approaches.

He's leaning against Steve's locker; nonchalant. Like he hasn't been there for the last twenty minutes, killing time.

When Steve looks up from the notes he's shuffling around in his binder, coming to a slow stop, Billy can see the dark shadows under his eyes. He looks half-awake and a little too pale. Even his hair is more flat than usual.

But Steve blinks at him and then down at his own chest and the

ridiculous sweater he's wearing. When he looks back up, his smile is lopsided and a bit tentative, but warm all the same.

“You're insulting my fashion, now?” he asks, shuffles in closer, and starts spinning his combination into his locker door. “I'm hurt.”

“No, you’re not,” Billy says with a grin, watching as Steve fiddles with his lock.

Because Steve Harrington doesn’t care about what Billy thinks of his clothes, Billy knows this -- and that’s one those stupid things Billy *likes* about him. One of those little tidbits of information he treasures about Steve. He doesn’t know all that much about Steve, just bits and pieces, just what he tastes like and what he sounds like on the brink of pleasure, just that he’s defiant and unyielding and yet impossibly soft.

Enough to intrigue; to entice. It’s like a drug -- with each little new thing he learns, he hungers for more, ready to dig through for scraps.

“You don’t look very seasonal,” Billy says.

He doesn’t either, in a black shirt and his usual denim jacket.

Billy wonders if it’s the mark on Steve’s neck that has him wearing a turtleneck. If he’s ashamed. He must be -- Steve wore Jonathan’s mark proudly. Then again, Billy did give him a whole spiel about it, so, he would understand if Steve was hiding it. His mark was much more -- *intense* than Jonathan’s. It doesn’t make Billy any less jealous, though.

Steve glances at him as he opens his locker door, gaze dragging down and lingering around Billy's abdomen and the buckle of his belt before drawing back up. His grin gets a little bit bigger. Brighter.

“I don't think you have much room to talk,” Steve says. “At least I ditched my coat. It's fifty-six out. That's practically sweltering for this time of year.”

Fifty-six and Billy is still fucking *freezing* . All the time. If he could stay in bed all day under his comforter, if circumstances allowed him to be that kind of lazy asshole, he would.

He shivers, just thinking about the cold wind that hit him an hour ago when he stepped outside for a smoke.

“You’re insane, pretty boy. It’s still winter out -- I’m freezing my balls off.”

Steve makes a small, considering sound as he stacks his things into his locker. “Well, that's a damn shame.”

Billy feels his cheeks flush a bit, heating with the implication of the comment. Well -- at least he doesn’t feel so cold anymore.

Feeling a bit shameless, Billy leans in and crowds into Steve’s space as he does so, peering into Steve’s locker while Steve stacks his books. He can’t not ask. He can’t just wait around to see if Steve’ll mention it.

“Your neck still look pretty?”

Steve falters. A few loose pieces of paper slide free from his binder and slip out into the floor.

He curses and crouches to scoop them up. But not before Billy can see the mess of notes and the dark, macabre sketches in the margins. Twisting vines that look like tunnels into nothing; flowers with teeth. Billy wants to ask about them, see if maybe that’s why he looks so tired, but then Steve stands, notes clutched to his chest, and shuffles back to file them away.

His face is flush. The tips of his ears too. Billy would put money on the fact that it's spread down his neck too, but he can't see it.

“It bruised,” Steve mutters.

Billy tries to bite back a grin, but fails. Steve just gets a bit redder.

“So, it’s even prettier?”

Billy’s eyes dart to Steve’s neck, and he fucking *itches* to see it. He clenches his fingers into a fist at his side, trying to ignore the impulse to look, to pull aside Steve’s collar and check for his mark.

But there's no one in the hallway. They're free and clear.

"So, are you gonna show me, or am I gonna have to beg?" Billy asks, voice low.

Steve breathes out sharply through his nose, and for a moment Billy thinks he took it too far. But then Steve looks at him, pupils dilated, and tilts his head, just a bit, like he's *teasing* .

"I think I'd like to see you beg," Steve says, then clears his throat and glances away again. "But I'm kind of on a time crunch, right now. So I don't know if I have the time."

Billy raises an eyebrow. He wants to look, but he's more curious about Steve.

"Where are you heading off to?"

There's a pause when Steve looks at him, lips pursing like he's not sure if he should tell him. Like he's keeping something a secret.

But then he says:

"I'm delivering a load of groceries mostly compiled of Eggos out to a secluded cabin in the woods where a small psychic girl lives."

And when Billy's eyebrows fly up, Steve cracks a grin.

"Kidding," he says. "I'm just running some errands for the Chief. I owe him a favor or two."

Billy rolls his eyes. "And that favor can't wait like, two seconds, to show me my handiwork?"

He knows he's nothing special to Steve, but maybe it'd be nice to pretend for a minute.

Steve makes a face, but glances down at his watch. He says something under his breath, something Billy can't quite make out, but he thinks he hears Steve say something like *hell, please don't kill me with your brain* -- and then Steve is meeting his eyes again.

He backs himself up into his locker a bit, so that the door acts like a barrier between him and the hallway, then reaches out and hooks two fingers into the top of Billy's belt. He gives a little tug, so that Billy crowds closer, so that *his body* is a barrier for prying eyes too.

“Ask me nicely,” Steve says.

They look like two friends sharing a secret.

This close up, there’s no escaping the way Steve smells. Even outside of a rut, he drives Billy insane, like his body is addicted and he just can’t get enough. He wants nothing more than to press his face to Steve’s neck and breathe in, to lose himself in Steve’s scent. Well -- the only thing he wants more than that is to mingle their two scents together. Even seeing the mark on Steve’s neck takes backseat to that desire.

But Billy will take what he can get.

“Pretty please?” he says, corners of his lips turning up into a smile he *knows* looks good on him. But Steve just raises an eyebrow, well aware of Billy’s charm tactics.

So he goes for more *real* . Summoning the actual desire there, the need. He thinks about the way the bruise might bloom on Steve’s skin and his mouth waters, his focus goes sharp.

“ *Please* , Steve,” Billy asks, voice nothing more than a rumble. “C’mon. Show me? Please?”

Steve's throat works. He shifts between the cage he's made for himself, of his locker and Billy's body, and then reaches up, curls his fingers into the collar of his sweater, and tugs it down.

It looks better than Billy thought. A bit yellow at the edges, and darker where Billy's teeth had pressed, red and purple. There are spackles of indigo, where the blood rose to the surface, and it looks like a galaxy against the side of Steve's neck.

Billy makes a noise. He’d be embarrassed about the base nature of it, if he wasn’t so distracted by Steve’s neck.

He can’t stop himself from reaching out and touching. He’s gentle, careful -- just brushing the barest hint of his thumb over the mark, watching the way Steve shivers under his touch.

“Fuck, that’s pretty,” he says, eyes wide.

Steve's eyes flutter shut. He takes a small, unsteady breath, his shoulders bunching as Billy touches the mark. His head tilts over, just a bit, but he seems to catch himself from fully baring it to Billy.

It wouldn’t be *that weird* for Billy to bite Steve’s neck in public. For Steve to submit to him. But neither of them are posturing, and they’re certainly not fighting. And it feels more intimate than that. Billy’s desire to take Steve’s neck under his teeth has less to do with another alpha submitting to him and is far more closely related to the way Billy *should* want to bite an omega’s neck, but doesn’t want to.

But Steve’s posture is unclear. And it doesn’t feel like the right moment. So Billy settles for just running his thumb over the mark, admiring his work. It certainly *is* pretty. And it looks good on Steve, good enough that it has Billy’s chest heating, his breath picking up.

“Maybe not as pretty as you, though,” Billy says. Even though, *god,* that sounds stupid the second it’s out of his mouth. Like some dumb romantic bullshit.

Steve's eyes fly open. He meets Billy's gaze with a wide eyed look, and the flush on his face renews.

His lips part, and his eyes dart down to Billy's mouth, like he's remembering what Billy did the last time he called Steve pretty. But they can't. Not here in the hall. Where anyone could see.

But Steve takes Billy's wrist in a loose grip. Pulls his gentle touch away from the mark on his neck, and places a soft, fleeting kiss to the heel of Billy's palm.

“I have to go,” Steve mutters, but he makes no move to leave.

Billy bites his lip to keep from saying something even stupider.

“Yeah. Okay,” he says, though he doesn’t make space for Steve to

leave.

Steve glances away, looks like he's fighting a smile, and fails spectacularly as he lets Billy's wrist go. It wrinkles at his eyes a little, but he ducks his head before Billy can get a proper look.

"I really do have to go," he says, but there's a touch of mirth in his tone, and he peers up with bright eyes as neither of them budge. "I can't be late."

Jesus, Steve has a nice smile. Beautiful eyes. And he's so goddamn loyal, Billy can't get over it -- even when he's being ditched. It's admirable.

So he pulls back, as much as he wants to stay close. As much as he wants to keep Steve for himself. He knows he can't. And part of him doesn't want to, either.

"See ya around, Harrington."

And then Billy turns to walk away, maybe just to prove to himself that he can.

He waves behind him as he goes. "Maybe wear something less ugly tomorrow, huh? I can barely stand to look at you."

Even though it's not true at all, and they both absolutely know it.

-*-

"You're *late* ."

Steve sighs and holds up the bags, rustling them like an enticement. "I brought chocolate chip Eggos."

The door swings open with a creek, and Steve lets out a breath of relief. El stands in the doorway, glaring up through her fringe.

"I'm sorry," Steve says. "I got caught up with-- a friend."

Her eyes narrow a bit more, but then she steps aside for him to file in. As he goes by, he places a hand on the top of her head and rustles

the mess of her curls. She ducks away with a little huff, but her face goes pink.

He makes his way into the small kitchen and opens the freezer. He's been doing this, bringing groceries out to the cabin for Hopper when he gets busy, since sometime in December. He's the only one besides Jonathan and Joyce with a car to get him out here, and Hop hates the idea of asking that family for anything more.

Steve was the next logical choice. He knows about the Upside Down, he proved himself good with the kids, and El took a shine to him instantly-- especially after Dustin had spent a good half-hour telling them all about Steve at the junkyard.

"Your hair is getting long," Steve says as he stacks the boxes away, glancing over his shoulder as El settles at the small kitchen table.

"Yes," she says.

Steve hums. "You wanna do something about it?"

El lights up. "Yes."

After Steve puts the groceries away, after they've gotten El's hair wet and combed out, a towel draped over her shoulders, Steve carefully takes a pair of scissors to the ends of her hair. He's done this for her twice, now. While the idea of cutting her hair had frightened her so much she'd thrown a fit and hid in her room when Hop had suggested it at first, Hop had promised they would never do something that she didn't like with her hair. They would never shave it all off. After mentioning the failed attempt, Steve had offered to do it for him, if El was willing.

He'd told her that he'd been cutting his own hair for ages, since his mother taught him how, and after staring at him and his hair for a long time, El had acquiesced.

She relaxes back into the chair as he carefully trims off the dead ends for her. Everytime he does something like this, for her or one of the kids, it reminds him of the long dead fantasy of married life, with Nancy, and the kids he thought he might have with her one day. It

fills him with a keen kind of warmth, despite the pang of loss that usually follows, too.

“What friend?” El asks, as he’s checking the length at her nape.

Steve hums, curious.

“You were with a friend,” she says. “What friend?”

“Oh,” Steve blinks down at the top of her head. “Um. Max’s brother. Billy.”

El twists in her seat, nose wrinkling up. “He’s a friend?”

And, okay, yeah. That’s a fair look. He doesn’t doubt the kids have had nothing good to say about Billy when they “sneak” radio calls to her.

Steve shrugs. “Kind of. Maybe.”

“You don’t know?”

“It’s kind of… new.” Steve’s lips press thin, as he struggles to find words for what Billy Hargrove is to him.

Because he doesn’t really know. They’ve only very recently been friendly, and even that has been full of pitfalls and miscommunication and fighting. And he doesn’t think he can call Billy his *boyfriend* or even his *mate* , even if their relationship has taken such a salacious turn. Even with the way Billy had touched him earlier, called him *pretty* , and looked very much like he’d wanted to kiss Steve in the middle of the hallway.

He just knows that he and Billy have a mutual want of the other. Secret as it may be.

“Like me and Max?” El asks.

Steve nods. “Yeah. A bit like you and Max.”

Turning back forward, El nods too, and lets Steve get back to work.

When he's done, he helps her dry her hair with a towel, and then laughs as she sinks her fingers in at the root to try and make it stand up as much as Steve's. He helps her as much as he can without any product and promises to bring by some hairspray for her next time he swings by.

He's in the middle of cleaning everything back up when the radio crackles in the corner. El is quick to rush to it, and Steve checks his watch. He doesn't have to wait to hear Mike's voice to know who it will be.

" *El? You there?* "

Beaming and giddy, El plops down onto her knees in front of it. "Hi, Mike."

" *Hi* ," Mike replies, and even through the radio, Steve can hear the rare beaming smile on the kid's face. " *You free? You have some time? I got a new book from the library I think you might like* ."

El shifts, and with a twitch of her fingers, one of the throw blankets on the couch drifts over to her. She wraps it around her shoulders and settles in.

"Yes. Steve is here."

" *Steve* ?" And Steve can picture that face too-- the way Mike's nose wrinkles up. " *Um. Hi, Steve* ."

Steve snorts as El holds out the receiver in his direction, her thumb on the button. "Hey, Mike."

" *What are you* --?"

"Mike," El cuts him off, tone a bit insistent. "The book."

" *Right, right. Um. Do you want to know what it's about?"*

"No," El sighs, and there's a dreamy little look on her face as Steve rounds the couch to sit in the corner. "Just read."

Mike does.

“Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the Western Spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun. Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-eight million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue-green planet whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea.”

Steve listens and watches for as long as he can. Mike stumbles his way through the first chapter, and Steve thinks he recognizes it but can’t quite place it. It’s funny, whatever it is, in a deadpan sort of way.

Mostly, though, Steve just likes the way El listens so intently. Hanging on Mike’s every word. The only way Steve can describe her expression is *smitten* . It’s sweet, pure, and Steve feels a heavy pang of longing in his chest. For someone to look like that at him. For someone to look at like that.

He nods off before Mike can get to the second chapter.

When he wakes again, it’s to Hopper’s big hand on his shoulder. There’s a blanket draped over him that hadn’t been there before, and El’s bedroom door is shut, light pouring out at the bottom.

“Wake up, kid.” Hopper says, grin tight on his face. “You should head home.”

“Shit,” Steve grunts, pushing up from where he’d slumped against the back of the couch. “Sorry, Hop. I dozed off.”

“It’s okay, Harrington. El insisted I let you sleep a little longer when I got in,” Hop says. “You not getting much sleep at home?”

Steve’s face burns a little, and he shrugs. “Nightmares. Just had a rough weekend.”

“I don’t imagine you wanna talk about it?” his brow arches.

Steve thinks back on the endless tunnels. On the stink of them. On running through them trying to track the shouts, the screams, he keeps hearing in the distance.

On finding Billy Hargrove in those tunnels. Thinking he was safe. Only for him to blink and find a demogorgon towering in Billy's place.

"Nah," Steve's throat works. "I'm good."

Hop nods. "Well, if you change your mind. You know where to find me."

"Thanks, Hop." Steve stands, stretches, and checks his watch. "I should, uh. I guess I should get home."

"It's late," Hop nods again. "Think you can find your way back?"

Steve snorts. That's happened once before. El had tracked him down after he'd walked a mile in the wrong direction through the snow.

"I'll be fine," he says.

"Get home, kid." Hop says. "Get some rest. Thanks for dropping by."

"No problem, Chief." Steve says, and then he's heading for the door.

It's only once he's out, in the dark and the cold, arms wrapped around himself, that he wishes he kind of had stayed and talked about his dream. About Billy Hargrove. About what he should do about the bite on his neck.

Because being out there, walking through the woods in the dim light of the moon streaming down from above, Steve feels incredibly alone.

-*-

"Nice jacket," Max says, when she climbs into the Camaro's passenger seat, eyes immediately locking on the "new" garment.

"Screw off," Billy says, and tears it out of their neighborhood.

He'd slipped Steve's tan coat on before he'd gotten in the car today. Neil had gone to work early, leaving Billy to his own devices this morning. His leather jacket is in the back seat, ready to be worn at

school, but this morning, after a tousle with his father the previous night, Billy had wanted a little bit of comfort. Steve's jacket had offered just that.

It takes five minutes for Max to wrinkle her nose, to turn her gaze away from where she's looking out the window and frown at him. She breaks through Ratt's drums and guitar riffs and says, "Is that Steve's jacket?"

Billy just shrugs. He knows she can smell it on him, because Steve's scent still lingers all over the fabric. He's been keeping the jacket hidden away and safe in the trunk of his car, bundled up and not exposed to any scents other than Billy's car. It smells like Steve and Billy and gasoline, and it smells great.

"Why do you have Steve's jacket?" Max's tone is both accusatory and curious.

"It's a nice jacket. I beat him up and took it," Billy says.

Max is quiet for a second. When Billy hazards a glance at her, he wishes he hadn't; she's smiling in a mischievous kind of way.

"It's totally not your style. He gave it to you, didn't he?"

The kid's too smart for her own good. Billy hates it, as much as he's proud of her, sometimes.

"Shove it," he says, and turns up the music.

Max lets it go. But she does tell him to say hi to Steve on her way out the door, so Billy knows he hasn't completely won.

School is boring, like usual. It's not nearly as cold, but he feels cooped up and caged, just like everyone else, clawing at the need to be outside. Maybe he's not used to the weather changes, the varying pressure and the strangely fluctuating days.

Billy ducks his way out of -- *is politely excused from* -- basketball practice during gym after elbowing one too many people in the gut.

He wanders down to the track, thinking he might run off his energy

with a couple laps. He's still in just shorts and a tee, still sweating from playing.

It's not really a surprise to see Steve running around the track, working off some of his own steam -- but it's a pleasant coincidence. Pleasant enough that Billy starts in on the track, letting his feet bounce against rubber. He runs easily for a bit, getting into the stride of it, before he starts letting himself try to catch up to Steve. It's fun, and he feels a little like he's chasing Steve like this, even though Steve isn't in on it. Billy is sprinting before he knows it, coming up on Steve's back with long strides.

He falls into place next to Steve, panting as he slows down to an easy jog.

"Hey," Billy says, on an exhale, all grins, high on endorphins.

Steve very nearly trips over his own two feet when he sees him, and his pace slows. He's worked up a good sweat, especially with the sweatshirt he's wearing while he runs, his hair everywhere like it gets after a hard practice. His brow is pinched, probably lost in his own head on his run, but when he sees Billy, a small smile curves over his mouth.

"You're not stalking me, now, are you?" Steve asks, breathless as they jog along.

Billy laughs, and it's a light thing, filling his chest with something warm and bright.

"Not this time, no."

"This time?" Steve's brow arches. "You saying you've stalked me before?"

"And I would tell you that...why?" Billy says, and then he winks and slaps Steve on the back, right in the middle. His hand lingers for a moment before going back to his side. "Don't worry, pretty boy. I don't *really* stalk you. Where's the fun if I don't have your attention?"

"Well," Steve glances away, focus falling back to the track, and his speed picks up, just a bit. "Who says you have it now?"

Billy's heart kicks up a beat.

He can't help the instinct that Steve's playful running away tugs out of him. It *burns* in his gut, suddenly, the desire to chase.

Billy looks at Steve's shoulders and speeds to catch up, grin wide on his face as he falls back into step with Steve.

“Is that the best you got?” Billy says. “I'll even give you a head start.”

Steve keeps pace with him around the corner, glancing over, and there’s a bit of a flush on his face. Like he’s enjoying this too.

“Who says I need one?”

And then his pace is hitching up. His long legs beating a good pace away, pulling ahead of Billy with ease down the track.

Billy does give Steve a head start. Not because he needs one, but because there's something about watching Steve speed off in front of him that has fire running through his veins.

After a beat, Billy starts after him, heart pounding in his ears. Steve is faster and his legs are longer, but Billy is determined. Flat out sprinting until he’s close, so close.

He reaches out, and his fingers brush against Steve's sweatshirt. Then, he loses it. And laughs, delighted, as Steve peels ahead of him again.

Steve glances over his shoulder at him, and there’s a bright and broad grin on his face too. It’s delightful, the way his face lights up with it, and his eyes too. He’s panting hard, though, has been running out here for longer than Billy-- which might just be the edge Billy needs.

“That all you got?” Steve asks, throwing his words back at him between breaths, and he runs that much faster, Billy on his tail.

Jesus, Billy’s having fun. He lets himself fall back for a bit, just so he can run that much harder to catch up.

Eventually, he takes a breath and falls into a dead sprint, running straight at Steve, knowing he *has* to catch him. He’s gotta.

He’s close, so close, and after a moment of fumbling, he gets a hand around Steve's arm and grabs, laughing, delighted, as he tugs to slow him down.

It’s fast, the way Billy veers them off of the track and tackles Steve to the grass, tangling them both in a mess of limbs. Billy holds him down, pressing him to the ground, panting, like Steve's his prey.

Beneath him, Steve pants just as hard. He smiles through it, brown eyes bright as he stares up at Billy, and Billy can see the rapid *thud* of his pulse at his neck. He radiates heat, sweat glistening on his skin, and his hair halos out over the grass beneath his head. He’s gorgeous, and he’s staring up at Billy like he’s the only thing in the world.

It's not quite given to him, but Billy's instincts scream at him to *take*. It’s hard, so hard, to fight them. So, maybe Billy yields a little.

After all, he won.

He ducks down and presses his forehead to Steve's neck, panting as he buries his face in the folds of Steve's sweatshirt. His mouth waters, so maybe he bites down a little on the fabric near his teeth, instead of Steve's neck.

Steve’s breath catches and then shudders right out of him near Billy’s ear. His hands find Billy-- one on his arm, the other clutching at the shirt along Billy’s ribcage, fingers curling in tight. He twitches, spasms really, beneath him, and then shivers under the pressing weight of Billy’s body.

“Billy,” he breathes, and Billy can hear the way it wavers, can smell the way Steve’s scent takes on a deeper note, richer with something like arousal.

“Steve,” Billy says, teeth still against cotton.

Because he doesn't trust himself to let go and *not* go straight for Steve's neck. He *wants* so badly. But he lets himself have this. And hopes to god it looks like, to any observers, Billy is just putting Steve in his place.

“We-- We shouldn’t be--” Steve’s throat works, and he shifts beneath him, squirms a little. “We shouldn’t be doing this here, right?”

Steve's right. It's already been too long. Billy waits a beat, gives himself another second, and pushes himself back and then onto his side, sprawling out next to Steve.

“Probably not.”

Damn, Steve's got him all kinds of out of his head.

“But anyone probably would've thought that was just posturing,” Billy says. “But...yeah. Maybe that was a little long for gloating.”

Steve props himself up onto his elbows, and when Billy gets a good look at him, his eyes are a little dark, his cheeks flush for an all new reason, but he’s got a crooked grin on his face that Steve pulls off as charming.

“Oh, so you weren’t just gloating?” he asks, though his tone says he doesn’t need Billy to answer that.

“I was trying very hard not to tear your clothes off with my teeth,” Billy says, feeling rather truthful in his joy.

He grabs at Steve's sweatshirt, at the damp spot Billy left with his mouth.

“See?”

Steve flushes a deep, absurd red. But he laughs a little, batting Billy’s hand away, and flopping back onto his back.

“Definitely not the place for that,” Steve says on an exhale. “I think we’d probably get detention.”

Billy laughs, too giddy to be bummed imagining the consequences they would suffer. “I could use a shower,” he says. “So could you.”

He's hoping for some privacy in the locker room, but he doubts he'll get it. It's dangerous, too. Too bad he's running high on hormones and not thinking the clearest.

Steve's head lulls over, and he meets Billy's eyes, biting his lip to keep from smiling too brightly. But Billy can see it. In his eyes and in the corners of his mouth.

"I don't think we should do that, either." Steve says. "We'd *definitely* get detention."

"You're trying to kill me, pretty boy."

Billy feels like he's going to explode if he doesn't get to press Steve down against the ground again, or against a shower wall. He'll take anything.

"My car?" Billy asks, hopefully.

" *God* , Billy." Steve says around a laugh, and he turns onto his side, propping his head up onto a fist, and he lowers his voice, like he's sharing a secret, and he kind of is. "Believe me when I say, I'd enjoy nothing more than having you on top of me again. But aren't we trying to keep this on the downlow?"

Billy whines. "Yeah, but it's not like I can take you back to my house, Harrington."

The words slip out before it's too late to cage them in. Steve raises his brow, like Billy is missing something, some half of the equation that should easily solve their problem.

But then he shakes his head a little and clears his throat. "No. Not yours. But you can come to mine. I thought that would be obvious, but I guess I didn't realize you didn't know that my parents are always out of town. I figured Tommy or Carol would've mentioned it."

Tommy and Carol don't mention too much about Harrington, unless they're complaining about his general existence. Billy -- doesn't know enough about Steve. He knows that. And he wants to fix it, to change it.

"You inviting me over, pretty boy?" Billy's chest swims with warmth, with the knowledge that yeah, Steve *is* inviting him over. That Steve *wants* him over.

“Obviously,” Steve says, like Billy had last week, but then he falters, eyes darting over Billy’s face, like he’s nervous Billy might say *no* . “If you want, anyway. There’s booze and privacy and almost everyone is fond of the heated pool.”

Billy’s eyes widen. “ *Heated pool?”*

He pushes himself up from his sprawl and sits, cross-legged on the grass.

“Well then,” Billy says. “What are we waiting for? Why aren’t we already on the way?”

“Um,” Steve blinks at him. “Fifth and sixth period?”

Billy pauses. Then, he grins. “Fuck ‘em.”

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The last time Steve had Billy at his place, standing in his foyer in their gym clothes, Steve had been in rut and had made the stupid decision to kiss Billy, starting this whole thing off. He’s not sure why he thought it was a good idea to invite Billy back, considering how that had ended.

Hormones, probably. And the excited way his heart had beat in his chest after Billy had chased and caught him on the track field.

Steve doesn’t fumble when he opens the door, this time. Probably because Billy is still a few paces away, shutting the driver door to the Camaro, and Steve leaves his front door open for him to follow after Billy walks around their cars.

He toes off his sneakers in the foyer and sets his bag down. They hadn’t bothered changing, but Steve had taken the time to get his things from his locker. He doesn’t know if Billy did.

But now that he’s home, Steve can finally peel off his sweatshirt. He’s been cooking in sweaters and high collared shirts all week, trying to keep the bite on his neck hidden, even though the highest it’s gotten has been fifty-eight. He hears Billy step in and shut the door behind him as he’s hanging up his sweatshirt on a hook on the

wall.

“I’ve got some spare swim trunks,” Steve says, scrubbing a hand through his hair and plucking at his shirt where it’s sticking to his skin from running. “Upstairs, if you want them.”

When he turns, though, Billy’s eyes are on him. Bright even in the dim light of the foyer, only sunlight filtering in from the windows in the living room, casting them both in soft hues of gold and blue.

Billy’s eyes are trained on the healing mark on Steve’s neck, hungry. He takes two strides forward and swallows the lump in his throat. “Lemme touch it?” he asks, at least wary enough to not just *take* it.

Billy *should* say something snappy and witty about Steve basically inviting him up to his room, but Billy can’t think straight, not when he’s presented with Steve and that mark, with Steve, smelling like sweat from their run. With a whole house, alone to themselves.

Steve doesn’t know how Billy manages to do it. How he always makes Steve feel like he’s something to be devoured, just by looking at him.

He shifts a little, from foot to foot, and nods his head as Billy steps closer. If Billy had asked to bite him again, he’s not sure he would’ve said yes so easily, but touching-- well, they’ve already done that.

Steve tilts his head when Billy gets close enough. The mark is still livid against his throat, but the yellowing has faded and the color diminished. Like someone had smeared it at the edges, until they blended more fully into Steve’s skin.

Billy touches it like Steve is something fragile, like a delicate work of art underneath his fingertips. He drifts his finger over the bruise, the bite, and remembers how beautiful and red it had been right after Billy gave it to him. He wants to fix it, to make it look like that again -- not that it isn’t beautiful still, now. But Billy is greedy.

After a moment, Billy pushes down a little bit with his thumb, just until he hears Steve let out a breath of air, a gasp.

“Jesus, you’re something else,” Billy says.

Steve shudders. He reaches up and catches Billy's wrist, squeezing a bit when he lets up the pressure, and he pulls his hand aside so that he can touch the mark himself. Eases his fingers over it and the ache he feels pulsing there.

"Am I?" he asks, because he doesn't think he is.

Steve's not anything special. He knows that. The only thing that might make him stand out from any other alpha in any other small town is the Upside Down-- and maybe this.

Billy just nods, feeling brutally incapable of words.

Jesus, Steve is a goddamn treasure, and Billy is absolutely unworthy.

That doesn't stop him from leaning in and kissing Steve, though. It's heated and deep from the moment Billy starts it, catching Steve by the back of the neck with a warm hand. Billy doesn't *truly* know where they stand, but he's gotta kiss Steve -- he simply has to.

Steve makes a small sound at the back of his throat. He stumbles forward a bit, sways into Billy, and his hands flutter to Billy's waist, fingers fisting into his shirt. It's hazy and warm, the slide of Billy's tongue against his slick and perfect, and Steve hums out and breath and closes his eyes. Lets himself be lead into it by the hand on the back of his neck.

He feels like he'd let that gentle hand lead him anywhere.

"God, I wanna get my mouth on you," Billy murmurs against Steve's lips, pulling back from the kiss, panting.

They're both still sweaty from running, which holds its own appeal. Billy wants to lick the sweat right off Steve, wants to taste him, wants to get his tongue all over every inch of Steve's body.

So, he nudges Steve closer to the stairs. "Either I blow you in your room, or I drop to my knees right here," Billy warns.

"Jesus, Billy." Steve laughs as he stumbles back, catching himself on the banister that leads up the steps. "Here I thought you wanted to come over for the heated pool."

He backs up one step, then another, until he's standing a good head above Billy on the staircase and just out of reach. His skin feels electric. There's a look in Billy's eyes that promises something, but Steve isn't sure what it is.

All he knows is that his heart has started beating double time, and there's something tingling along the back of his scalp. All he knows is he feels that same little thrill he did on the track, when Billy started chasing him, as Billy takes a step up and Steve counters it with a step back.

Billy's heart climbs straight to his throat, pounding in his chest. He can *feel* the way his muscles tighten, the way his energy kicks up, instincts ready for a chase. He brims with the electricity of it, the pure and unadulterated need.

Billy takes one more step up. Steve takes one step back.

Billy lets out a breath.

Steve bolts.

There's a beat before Billy pushes himself forward and starts after Steve, thundering up the stairs, tearing after Steve's nimble, athletic body. Billy can smell Steve as he chases after him, warm and sweet and *so good* .

Steve is quick, around the corner and then down the long hall. He can hear Billy behind him, awareness prickling down his spine, and he knows the goal is to *get away* -- but Steve *wants to be caught* .

He doesn't catch him until Steve's halfway through the door to his bedroom, arm looping around his waist and hauling him back, and *god* , sometimes Steve forgets just how *strong* Billy is.

The rush of catching Steve is like a drug, immediate and overpowering. Like taking a hit of the good stuff and feeling it sink straight in. Billy gets an arm around Steve's midsection and hauls him close, Steve's back to Billy's torso. He presses his nose to Steve's ear and growls, though his face is broken by a grin and it shows in the sound, he knows. He sounds *pleased* and desirous, and he revels in it

for a minute, just pulling Steve close to relish in his catch.

“Got you,” Billy says, and licks up Steve’s neck, right below his ear.

Steve *shudders* , breath coming a little short, and his hands are hot when they land on Billy’s forearms. He digs his fingers into the muscle there, feels it flex under his fingertips, and huffs out a little laugh.

“Yeah,” he says. “So, what are you gonna do with me?”

“Everything,” Billy says, fully intending on it.

He manhandles Steve toward the bed and tosses him down on it, quickly following. Billy straddles Steve’s hips, admiring his prize for a moment, before he gets his hands on the hem of Steve’s gym shirt and pulls, easing it over Steve’s head.

“Jesus, look at you. So pretty.”

Billy takes a moment to just run his fingertips down Steve’s torso, gently touching, admiring. Steve’s skin jumps under his touch, the muscles bunching and then relaxing, and Steve stares up at him with dark, hungry eyes.

Steve feels hot all over. Feels like everywhere Billy touches, everywhere he looks, is like a brand. Like he’ll never be able to wash him from his skin.

His hands smooth up Billy’s thighs, fingers pressing into the tight lines of muscle, and he keeps them there to anchor himself. Because he feels so bare beneath Billy’s eyes, so completely vulnerable--which is ridiculous because they’ve seen each other naked in the lockers.

This, though, feels heavier. Feels intimate. Feels like *everything* . Especially when Billy looks at him like *that* , like Steve is something to be wanted.

He hooks two fingers into the bottom hem of Billy’s shirt and gives a little tug. “You, too.”

Billy takes the direction for what it is and tugs off his shirt. It exposes the hard panes of his abdomen, still glistening with a bit of still-lingering sweat in the dim light of Steve's room.

"This more like it, pretty boy?" Billy asks.

And god, there's something about the moment that he can't get over. Straddling Steve in his bedroom, shirtless and breathing hard. There's something so intimate about it, something so magical. Like a goddamn movie, and Steve is the star.

There's no mistaking how hard Billy already is, in his gym shorts. There's no hiding it at all. He should be ashamed, but he's not -- instead, he's just panting.

"Yeah," Steve says, eyes darting down over his broad chest, over the hard lines of his abdomen as he breathes. "Yeah, that's more like it."

He curves up beneath him, arches forward, and presses his mouth to spot right over Billy's heart. His hands slide up, from Billy's thighs to hips to his waist, fingers splaying out over all of that skin. Glancing up through his lashes, Steve opens his mouth and drags his tongue under Billy's clavicle, tasting the salt of sweat and the deeper, muskier tang of Billy's skin.

Then, hungry and mouth watering for more, he grazes his teeth against Billy's collar.

Billy has never felt Steve's teeth on him. It's unexpected. It shouldn't be, not with the way Steve had been pressing his lips on Billy's skin -- but it somehow still is, like Billy had never before considered the possibility.

All his instincts should tell him to fight back, to grapple with Steve until Billy's on top, until Billy's teeth are against Steve's skin -- but he doesn't want to. He yields to it with a shiver and a groan, his fingers digging into the flesh of Steve's back, his sides, wherever Billy can get purchase.

"Fuck," Billy groans, and he *feels* himself open his torso for Steve's attention, leaving space for Steve's head, his teeth, for Steve to roam

free, unhindered.

Steve moans against his skin, eyes fluttering heavy and half-lidded. He presses in closer, until Billy is practically in his lap, Steve's arms looped loosely around his waist, and tastes and tastes and *tastes* .

He can't get enough of it, of Billy under his lips and his tongue and his teeth. He feels crazy, and hazy, drugged by Billy's skin. He drags his teeth near the darker skin of Billy's nipple, hears him hiss out a breath, and hums his reply.

Distantly, Steve realizes that he's breathing hard, that he's aching in his gym shorts just like Billy, but he thinks he could spend *hours* tracing the tight flex of Billy's muscles with his tongue.

There's something about Steve's teeth on him that drives Billy wild. Steve's lips, his tongue, are enough to drive him crazy with lust, but his teeth are a whole other story. They pull Billy straight out of his head, sending him reeling with sensation, with the strange and dizzying need to *submit* .

Billy wants to fall backward onto the bed and haul Steve on top of him. And that's startling enough. Scary enough.

He whines, low in his throat, fingers moving to tighten against Steve's shoulders. Billy doesn't have words, can't *find* them.

Steve glances up at him again, and his hands smooth around to his lower back, then slow up his spine. He kisses over his heart again and rocks up and forward, into the spread of Billy's thighs. Bliss zips through him, as shocking and startling as everything else about them. Steve sighs out a sound of pleasure, nails digging blunt at Billy's back.

"What were you saying, earlier?" Steve asks against his skin, eyes dark and taunting; *challenging* . "About doing everything to me?"

With Steve's teeth off his skin, Billy can find focus again. He can find the challenge in Steve's words.

He moves fast, pushing Steve down to the bed, back flat against the mattress, body on display for Billy for a moment. He stares down

hungrily, and then attacks. Billy gets his mouth wherever he can, tongue sliding over Steve's sweat-salty skin.

Billy hooks his fingers under the waistband of Steve's gym shorts and tugs until they're off, until Steve is naked and spread out on his bed, completely bare for Billy.

"God, you're pretty," Billy says, taking in the picture of Steve, the beauty that is his to behold. "Lemme blow you?" Billy asks, pressing a kiss to the hollow of Steve's hip, eyes looking up at him, wide and pretty.

Steve huffs out an incredulous laugh. "Is that even a question? Yes. Fuck, yes."

Billy smiles against Steve's skin and bites down against his hip, feeling the skin shift around the bone. For a moment, he sucks until he knows there will be a raw red mark there, something to remember Billy by, after the afternoon is over.

Hungry, Billy makes his way toward Steve's cock, grabbing it in his hand to get his fingers over it, first. He gives it a good few strokes, watching as he salivates, truly appreciating the moment, appreciating Steve's body. It feels like a gift, and Billy does his damndest to appreciate it.

But he can only wait so long.

When he can no longer stand it, he gets his mouth on Steve. He licks from the base to the tip, and then around the head, before sliding Steve's length into his mouth.

" *Fuck* ," Steve gasps out, his head flopping back against the bed, one of his knees jerking as *heat* consumes him.

God, Billy's mouth will be his absolute ruin. He knows this, with sudden clarity. That no one else will ever make him feel this hot, this completely on edge, with just their mouth alone.

His hands fumble for purchase as Billy works him over. As he starts to suck and bob his head between the splay of Steve's thighs. He clutches at the sheets with one, and then sinks the other into his own

hair and *pulls* , the sharp pain at his scalp enough to keep him from completely blowing his load in the first minute.

" *God* , Billy." Steve gasps, pressure hot in his belly.

Billy goes hot when Steve says his name like that, his chest going tight, his own cock aching.

It only spurs Billy on, encourages him to suck harder, to work Steve over better.

He's not entirely committed to getting Steve to come immediately, though. After a moment, Billy slows his roll, slinking his hands under Steve's body to grip at his ass while he takes him as deep as possible, testing his own limits. He's gentle, and a little soft, and when he bottoms out and reaches his max, he pulls back and tongues at Steve's head before trying again.

Steve's lower back curves as he arches. He pulls, helplessly, at the comforter beneath him as his breath comes in stops and stalls.

It's not *fair* . It's not fair how easily Billy is stringing him out, stringing him along. It's not *fair* how *slow* and all-encompassing Billy is moving his mouth over him. Taking him nearly to the hilt and then pulling back off to the head. Then doing it again. Then doing it *again* .

Steve feels like he's gonna scatter right out of his own skin.

"Billy," he pants, to the ceiling, because he can't move from where he's shaking beneath him. "Billy, Billy, *please* ."

Billy hums around Steve, fucking giddy with it. He's dizzy and hungry and he needs this so much, loves the feeling of the weight of Steve's cock on his tongue.

When Steve whines, he stills for a moment, just because he can. He stops moving and then thumbs along Steve's hips, just tracing the veins beneath his skin, *appreciating* him for all he's worth.

He's still for a long moment -- and then he begins moving again in earnest.

“God, *god* , yes.” Steve hisses in a breath between his teeth, hips stuttering up into that heat, muscles flexing beneath his skin, sweat glistening anew as pleasure mounts.

It builds in waves. Crashes through Steve until he’s drowning in it, lost in it, completely at the mercy of Billy’s mouth on him. Of his hands petting over his hips and squeezing at his ass.

His head tosses back and forth in a lazy, hazy motion. His toes curl in his socks, the only scrap of clothing he’s got left on, and he finally drops a hand to Billy’s head, fingers sinking in his hair and giving a little tug as he moans. It’s a shaky, dangerous little sound.

“ *Billy* ,” he whines.

Billy hears it, and hums around Steve’s cock. He slows down again, traitorous and torturous. Just because he can.

His fingers dig into the muscles of Steve’s ass as he tongues over the length of Steve. Too gentle, too light. He knows he’s torturing Steve, but he’s a sucker for his noises, for the way he twitches and shakes underneath Billy’s hands and his mouth.

Breath catching in his throat, Steve lets out a keening sound and tugs at Billy’s hair again. This time for an all new reason, as pleasure edges off, as Billy slows again until Steve can breath right and he can *feel* the pressure pulsing below his navel. His whine *quivers* through him, and his jaw winds tight.

“Billy, c’mon.” He breathes, body itching for *something* , like its been denied something integral.

Maybe it’s the tone of Steve’s voice, or maybe it’s a spike of Billy’s own desire that hits him, but Billy decides that finally, he’ll yield.

But only if Steve asks *nicely* .

Billy pulls up and tongues and the head of Steve’s cock, working him over until he *whines* . And then he pulls off, grinning up at Steve through his long lashes. “Say please.”

Steve feels like he’s a little on the edge of madness. Billy is providing

pleasure, certainly, tantalizing and sweet as it is-- but he keeps reeling Steve away from the edge. Keeps building him up, blood boiling in his veins, only to bring him back down to a steaming, terrible simmer.

So, Steve does as Billy says. As he *demands* . Because he *needs* to.

“Please,” Steve whispers, pulling gently at Billy’s hair again, eyes a little hazy, flush high in his face and his chest. “Please, Billy, let me come.”

Billy practically purrs when Steve’s hands pull at his hair, coaxing a little bit of that dominance out of him. Or maybe, it’s just the way Steve begs.

The sounds that come out of Steve stoke a fire in Billy’s gut, riling him up in the best kind of way. He wishes he could record, them, play them on a loop for all of eternity -- but he knows if he did that, he’d never get anything done. But now -- he eats them all right up, committing everything to memory.

“Good boy,” Billy says with a smile, and presses a kiss to Steve’s hip before giving in.

Without preamble, he takes Steve’s length back into his mouth, sinking down slow and easy, until Steve’s cock hits the back of his throat.

“ *Fuck* ,” Steve spits, breathless and devastated.

His other hand flies from the linens to Billy’s hair too, sinking in deep into the curls, as his spine curves up, as the muscles in his thighs jump, as the lines of his abdomen flex and string tight. His thighs tremble a little, as he fights the urge to close them around Billy’s head, heat searing through him, seconds from oblivion.

He’s not sure if it’s because Billy has been drawing it out, making him wait, that has him shaking and burning up from the inside out. Or if its the deep, rasped *good boy* that’s got Steve trembling apart at the edges.

Either way, it doesn’t take much to get Steve *right there* again.

Hanging on the precipice and desperate to fall.

“Please, *please* ,” he begs between little gasps and hitches, a keening whine catching at the back of his throat. “Please, Billy.”

This time, Billy relents.

He slides his hands underneath Steve’s ass and grabs, lifting Steve’s hips off of the bed. It drives Steve’s cock even further into Billy’s mouth, until Billy nearly chokes. But it’s so, *so* hot that he does it again and again, urging Steve to buck his hips, just so that Billy can feel Steve’s length fill him up, hot and heavy on his tongue.

Steve’s hips stutter and stammer upward, cock sliding in and out of the welcome heat of Billy’s mouth. His breath comes so short he nearly stops breathing all together, pleasure winding so tight it aches, *throbs* , low below his navel--

Right up until it snaps, nerves fraying, as he sobs out his release. His fingers curl too tight in Billy’s hair, one hand dropping to the muscle of Billy’s shoulder to dig his nails in. His orgasms shakes through him, rattles his bones, and his hips jerk as his Billy works him through it. Sucking and tonguing along the underside of him as Steve spills out into his mouth, until Steve grits his teeth and *whines* Billy’s name, thrashing beneath him-- the base of his cock swelling.

Steve’s so far gone that he can’t even be embarrassed that he’s popped his knot during a blow job for the second time in as many occasions.

There’s no problem for Billy with Steve trying to knot his mouth. It’s hot, honestly -- knowing that Steve’s so turned on that his body wants Billy *that* badly.

It’s just a pity that he can’t fit Steve’s knot inside his mouth. Desperately, Billy wishes that he could, wishes he could take everything Steve’s body wants to give him. But he’ll have to make do. And all he wants to do is make Steve feel good.

So, Billy slides his hands out from under Steve, swallows him down, and gets his fists around Steve’s knot. He provides just enough

pressure, fingers wrapping tight around the heat of him. It's *hot* , feeling another alpha's knot under his grip. He wants to lick it, to get his mouth on every part of Steve. But he also doesn't want to take his mouth off his length.

Billy eases off a little bit, lessening the suction and the pressure. Billy laps at him, tonguing off all of Steve's come, coaxing little spurts out of him, swallowing each with a moan.

Steve spasms and twitches beneath him. His jaw is wound so tight his temples throb, and he has to press his tongue to the roof of his mouth to keep himself from turning into a sobbing mess.

Still, he keens again and arches long and slow, hands coming up so that he can bury his face in them. One of his knees drags up, his hips giving another helpless little stutter as Billy keeps him trapped in that perfect wet heat, as he swallows everything Steve has to give until he's breathless and trembling, pulse pounding in his head and in his cock.

He wants to stay like that, buried in Billy's mouth, for forever. But as the seconds drag on toward minutes, breath hot and wet against his palms, he feels the pressure at the base of his cock start to diminish--leaving him twitching and oversensitive and squirming to get away.

Once Steve starts to squirm, Billy eases up on the pressure --gradually. He likes all the little noises that he drags out of Steve with every slow drag of his tongue, every swallow of his throat. But eventually, Billy is kind enough to pull his mouth off of Steve, to drag his hands back to Steve's hips to hold him steady.

Indulgently, before Steve's knot is gone entirely, Billy draws his tongue down Steve's dick, just so he can feel the bulge of Steve's knot under it. Billy groans at the heat of it, nuzzling his forehead against Steve's crotch as he gets his mouth on him. Gentle, but clearly enamored.

Steve grunts, hands flying back down to bunch in the comforter. The muscles in his stomach contract, breath leaving him like it's been punched out of him, and he shudders from head to toe, embers of the fire that had been roaring in his belly turning over.

“ *Billy* ,” he gasps, *pleads* , and his eyes roll back before he can stop them, body giving another little spasming jerk.

“Shit, you’re hot,” Billy says, breath hot over the base of Steve’s dick.

He lavishes gentle attention on Steve’s cock for a little while, until his knot goes all the way down. Until Steve is shivering and whimpering underneath him.

Billy kisses at Steve’s hip, his abs, working his way up Steve’s torso until he’s towering over Steve, grinning down at him. Steve looks fucked out and debauched, and Billy just can’t drink enough of him in. Billy licks his lips.

“Jesus, look at you,” Billy whispers, full of awe, and catches Steve in a hungry kiss.

Steve moans, soft and breathy, into his mouth. His arms come up, lazy and slow and languid, to drape over Billy’s shoulders.

If he wasn’t already flush, sweat glistening on his skin, it would’ve burned anew at Billy’s words. He can’t imagine what he looks like. He must be a mess.

Dumb and clumsy and high on pleasure, Steve says so, muttering against Billy’s lips. “I’m a mess,” he argues.

Steve isn’t wrong. He looks absolutely *wrecked* .

It’s the most beautiful thing Billy’s ever seen.

“You are,” Billy says, and kisses Steve again, long and deep. “You’re so hot. *So hot* .”

Billy climbs over Steve’s hips, straddling him, just wanting to stay close. He likes the heat of Steve’s naked body beneath him, needs it to ground him. Billy lets his hands pull over Steve’s skin, soothing, appreciating, *worshiping.* He wishes he could stay like this for hours, wishes that he could keep Steve on the edge of disaster until he absolutely falls apart.

Steve wants to curl into him. Around him. Wants to fall into the

soothing heat of him and let his lax muscles unwind, still shaking a little.

But Billy's fingers, rough and big and warm, do wonders. Eases the tremors out of him until his breath evens back out, until his heart slows back down, and Steve is stupidly, incandescently grateful for it.

Eventually, he smooths his hands up over Billy's thighs. Strokes up and down slow, fingers teasing beneath the hem of Billy's shorts. His eyes are soft, expression softer, as he stares up at Billy. As he curves up a little to catch his mouth again in a chain of short, sweet kisses.

"What do you want?" he asks, between two of them, fingers inching higher beneath Billy's shorts. "What can I give you?"

Billy groans, imagining the possibilities. He shivers with Steve's fingers on him, goosebumps prickling his flesh with each brush of Steve's hand. He wants everything, and here, in the strange safety of Steve's bed, he can picture it all. He feels a little dizzy with it, drunk -- not unlike the way he felt at the party, but strangely, even more groggy, even more greedy.

"God," Billy pants out, hips squirming on top of Steve, like he's trying to edge closer to Steve's fingers. "Anything? Anything you'll give me."

Billy wants it all. Even the desperate dream, the sinful fantasy, of pushing Steve down against the mattress and burying himself in Steve's heat -- like Steve was his whining, desperate omega.

But Billy knows he can only ask for so much.

"Your mouth?" Billy asks. "Will you give me that?"

Steve nods, throat working, his eyes a little wide. "I mean, I've never-- But, yeah. Yeah, anything."

He pulls his hands free from the bottom hem of Billy's shorts and goes for the waistband. He feels suddenly, ridiculously nervous.

Both times Billy has gone down on him, taken Steve into his mouth,

it's been so good that Steve had *knotted* . He doesn't want it to be awful. Doesn't want Billy to hate it.

And he really kind of definitely wants Billy's cock in his mouth.

"How do you--?" Steve blinks up at him, inching Billy's shorts down his hips. "How do you want to do that? You want me on my knees for you?"

Billy probably should. He *should* want to tower over Steve, especially after catching him at the track -- and again, after running up the stairs. He should want to bury his hands in Steve's hair and look down at him and just *take* .

But Billy finds himself rolling off to the side, off of Steve's hips, until his head finds Steve's pillow. His hands reach over and pull at Steve, urging him back toward Billy, urging Steve *on top of him* . He pictures Steve straddling his legs, pinning Billy down and taking Billy into his mouth just like Billy had done to him. It's hot, the role reversal -- strangely so. Maddeningly so.

"C'mon. Just like this," Billy says, wriggling out of his gym shorts and briefs in one go. "You're gonna do great with that pretty mouth of yours."

Steve shakes his head, face pink. "You gotta stop calling me pretty," Steve mutters.

He feels a little ridiculous. Like he's all limbs, as he situates himself over Billy's legs. He glances up at where Billy is propped against his pillows, lounging back like he own the bed *and* the place, and he leans down to press a kiss next to Billy's navel.

This close, Steve can smell nothing but Billy. That same warmth that still clings to the black wool coat he has hanging on the back of his door. His mouth waters, and he breathes out sharply against the lines of Billy's abdomen as he slides one hand up to his hip, the other curling carefully around the base of Billy's dick.

It feels hot against his palm. Smooth and soft, and as he lays kisses down to the trail of hair that leads to Billy's crotch, Steve strokes

over it.

Steve's touch is something else. It makes Billy shiver and quake, dragging hitching breaths out of his chest like he's panting, caught right after a run.

"God, Steve, *please* ," Billy manages, voice closer to a whimper than he'd like. Closer to a whine.

Steve's hands on him feel criminally good, but his breath, hot against Billy's skin, is base enough to kill. His cock is already so hard, nearly painfully so, leaking at the tip. He can feel the way it twitches in Steve's grip, swollen and desperate for more.

"Yeah, okay." Steve breathes, nodding his head, and he shuffles a little down the bed. "I got you. M'sorry. I got you."

He presses his lips to the base, near his own fingers. Feels the hot skin of Billy's cock, silken and burning against his mouth. He licks up, drags his tongue up the side, and when he reaches the head, he wraps his lips around him, mindful of his teeth.

His tongue works against the underside of Billy's cock as he inches a little more into his mouth, testing and tasting at the same time. Billy tastes as hot as he smells, rich and tangy, and he feels weighty and like velvet on the flat of his tongue.

He glances up, through his lashes, just to make sure it's okay. When he sees the look on Billy's face, he knows it is. He strokes up with his hand, to his lips, and then back down-- and follows it for as long as he can, until his jaw protests and his throat flutters in warning. He backs off at that point, nose wrinkling up as spit slides down Billy's shaft, and he pulls off to wipe his mouth on the back of his hand-- but keeps stroking.

"Sorry," he mumbles again, and then takes him in his mouth again, setting a tentative rhythm.

There's nothing at all to be sorry for -- and Billy tries to make that obvious with the way he threads his fingers through Steve's hair. The heat of him is overwhelming and amazing, and he does his best not

to buck up into it, ignoring the way his body wants to drive straight into that wet warmth. This is *more* than enough to get his blood pumping, to get his gut pulling taut.

Billy watches him, propped up on the pillows, eyes glued to Steve and the way he works Billy over -- going from tentative to determined. It's hot, *so hot* . There's a desperate quality to it that ramps up the heat, the appeal. Billy can't stop himself from moving one of his hands to Steve's jaw, to cup it gently as Steve bobs over Billy's cock. Feeling the rhythm, feeling the way Steve's throat works as he swallows.

"Fuck, baby," Billy groans. "Jesus, you're good."

The praise goes straight to Steve's head. Makes him feel hazy and warm all over, the breathless words tingling along his nerves.

He lets out a little moan around Billy's length. His eyes flutter shut, and he tries to take *more* . Because *fuck* , does he want this to be good, wants *to be* good, for Billy.

His throat protests when he slides Billy's cock too deep into his mouth, and he tries not to gag or cough or choke like an idiot. He feels like he's making a mess, lips spit slick and stretched too wide, but it eases the slide of his hand and Billy groans, so he thinks it doesn't matter.

Billy slides his thumb under Steve's lower lip, dragging through the spit that's gathered there. It's slick and warm, and Billy groans, his hips shuddering with the need to rut upward again. But he doesn't. Instead, he just groans again and lets his head fall back against the pillows, losing himself in the pleasure of it.

"Steve," Billy moans, fingers tightening in his hair: a warning, a plea.

And Steve doesn't stop. Keeps stroking, works his tongue along the hot underside of Billy's cock, sucks sloppily and wetly around him.

Because he wants it. Needs it. Needs to have the taste of Billy on his tongue and in his mouth. Wants to swallow him down.

It doesn't take long. Billy would be embarrassed about the speed with

which Steve drives him to the point of completion -- but he just can't bring himself to care. Instead, he just lets it all build, crescendoing into a wave that tumbles over him, washing pleasure over every inch of his skin. He groans with it, spilling himself into Steve's mouth, onto his tongue, into his throat, as Billy's nerves explode with sensation.

The air around them fills with Billy's mumbled words -- Steve's name, curses, harried and breathy pants of *please, please, please* .

Billy feels it coming before he even has a chance to think about it. There's a familiar heat in his gut, a twisting in his belly as warmth begins to spread at the base of his dick. Steve's mouth is still on him, still lapping up the last of Billy's come -- and Billy knows that if Steve *doesn't stop* , he's going to pop a knot right here, right now.

His hands get frantic, pulling and tugging Steve *off off off,* before Billy's body can get the chance to actually make it happen, before his body can decide that it truly wants to *mate* with Steve. Not that he doesn't want that -- because he *does* , in a terrible, terrible way -- but Billy just can't let himself. It feels like giving in too much, like putting too many of his cards out on the table for Steve to see.

So, he pulls Steve off and up and and immediately bends to kiss him, licking the taste of himself out of Steve's mouth.

Steve's jaw is still a little loose, his mouth open, when Billy drags him into a kiss. It's messy and lazy and Billy's tongue is so hot against his. Steve can still taste him, at the back of his mouth, and he moans against Billy's lips and follows him back up the bed as the fingers in his hair pull, until he sprawled out over him.

Until it's all skin against skin, sweaty and flush, both of them breathing hard in between the hazy presses of their mouths. Steve's hands shake a little as he finds purchase on Billy's shoulder, splayed over his ribs, and he sucks at Billy's tongue in a pantomime of what he'd been doing between his legs.

Billy groans, shivering, body and nerves still oversensitive.

"Steve," he moans out. His voice is gruff and shaky and absolutely

destroyed . He feels it, too, like his body is still trying to tear itself apart.

He gets a hand on the back of Steve's neck, just grappling for a place to hold on, an anchor. Steve shudders against him and goes *heavy* .

A tension Steve hadn't known had built in his shoulders and his back drains right out of him, with Billy's hand at his nape, steady and firm and warm. He lets out a breathy sound against Billy's mouth, slumping against Billy's chest, their legs a tangle, as they kiss until Steve's lips feel tender.

He pulls away to catch his breath, but there's something needy and helpless beating in his chest. He presses a kiss to the corner of Billy's mouth, to his cheek, to the rough stubble of his jaw, lips feeling raw just from the touch of him.

"Was it--?" *God* , his own voice is a mess, rough and low and breathless. "Was it good? Was I--?"

Was I good?

He's shaking to know. But he can't quite say it.

God , Billy thinks. *It was the best thing that's ever happened to me* .

It's true, too. *Steve* is the best thing that's ever happened to him.

"It was so good," he says, instead.

He imagines telling Steve it was so good he nearly popped a knot, but he doesn't. He keeps that one quiet. It's hot when Steve does it, but embarrassing for Billy. He should have more control than that, more discipline. It *means* more.

Billy kisses Steve back, losing himself in the taste of the two of them mingling. It's heady and rich, and he just can't stop. "So good," he murmurs against Steve's lips, pulling at tender flesh with his teeth. " *You* were so good."

Steve sighs against his mouth, eyes going heavy. He lets out a soft sound and his lips are tingling-- his fingertips and his scalp and his

toes are, too. He wants to drown in this moment. With Billy's hand at his nape, his praise in his ears, his taste in his mouth.

He leans in, chases Billy's tongue into his mouth, says *thank you* without saying a word. When he pulls back, they're both breathing heavy, and Steve lets his forehead rest against Billy's.

"We *really* would've gotten detention if we'd tried that in the locker room." Steve says.

Billy laughs and lets his eyes close. Loose limbed and tired, he throws his arms around Steve and wrangles him down against the bed, crowding against him. There's something thrilling about pressing Steve down against the sheets that smell intoxicatingly like both of them.

"Probably," Billy says, lips at Steve's ear. "Can't say I'm mad about where we ended up."

Steve hums, pressing his cheek to Billy's, and he slides an arm around Billy's waist to splay his fingers out over Billy's back-- reveling in the soft skin, in the way that every touch feels soothing and warm and *good* -- tucking himself closer against Billy. "Though, your car would've been fun, too."

"The back of my car is pretty damn cramped," Billy says.

He dips his head toward Steve's neck, though he doesn't bite. Just snuffles against Steve's jugular, nosing against the sweaty skin until Steve smells even more like him. Steve hasn't offered it to him, but Billy's too drunk on the way their essences mingle, the way the whole room smells like sex, like lust, like satisfaction.

"But I'm sure we could've made do," Billy says.

Steve shivers and shudders against him. He smooths his hand up Billy's spine, turns his face to hide his smile in the mess of Billy's curls, and he breathes deep.

Everything smells spectacular. Smells heady and warm and Steve wants to bury his face in his own sheets, where Steve and Billy have met and mingled and tangled together. He feels that heady, low

pulse of *belonging* thrum somewhere deep in his chest, and he knows the look on his face is dopey and delighted and that he shouldn't let Billy see it.

"Next time," he says, because he wants there to be a next time, and a time after that, and a time after that-- but he doesn't know how to ask for it. "Maybe. If you want. Could drive up to the quarry, maybe smoke a joint, stretch out over the hood while it's still warm."

Billy breathes out, and he feels something go easy in him. Placated. He wants that, so badly. He wants this again and again and again.

"Yeah," Billy says, and kisses Steve's ear. "Definitely. Let's."

After a moment, Billy shifts on the bead, leaning up against the pillows and hauling Steve up to lean on his chest. It's a close moment, tender. There's something about Steve's weight over Billy's heart that makes him feel gentle. It feels like something he never thought he'd have.

He lets his eyes roam over the room, taking in Steve's space. It's kind of like slipping behind the veil -- he loves it, getting to peer into all of Steve's little intricacies. Stuffed animals tucked onto a chair in the corner, the mess of his desk, a pile of comics stacked on one of the shelves on the wall. Some clothes, piled on the ground near the closet-- his shirts and sweaters hanging, colors grouped with like colors. Framed photos, of Steve and his mother, by the window. Each little piece, each little slice, screams *Steve Harrington* .

That's when Billy's eyes catch on the back of Steve's door, propped half open in their haste. To the coat, hanging there. The one Billy borrowed.

"You haven't worn it, since," Billy says.

Steve blinks up, from where he'd almost been in a half-doze, draped against Billy's chest. He follows Billy's eyes, tracks his gaze over to the back of his bedroom door, and burns up to his scalp-- face and ears and neck going red.

"Oh," Steve shrugs. "Well. It's uh… it's not been cold enough for it."

But it *has* , Billy thinks. It's been freezing, since Steve gave him that tan coat, since Billy gave back Steve's favorite. In the last week, it's been pleasant -- but before that, there's been plenty of days worthy of that coat.

"Uh huh," Billy says.

His eyes move from the coat to Steve, who is too red to be telling the truth.

"Did I ruin it for you?" Billy asks, though his tone is playful, warm.

"No," Steve says, instantly; quickly.

But, in a way, he's lying. It's not that Billy *ruined it* . It's that Steve still couldn't stand the idea of washing it, of getting rid of their mingled scents and the memory of *good, right, perfect* that had come with putting it on. It's that Steve couldn't wear it again to school, knowing Billy would smell it and know, that everyone would, and that he can't focus on anything but the longing in his chest when he does.

Billy frowns a little bit, but he's not upset, not really. He imagines shrugging the coat back on, letting the silk on the inside slide over his skin. He imagines rubbing his neck on the wool collar, making sure that Steve can never lose that smell. He's a little giddy with the thought, with the idea that Steve owns something that Billy's so thoroughly marked -- like the coat, in the back of Billy's car. He hopes, greedily and childishly, that his smell still lingers on the fabric.

"Uh huh. You sure about that?" Billy asks, letting out a bit of a yawn, fatigue settling into his bones. "Did you wash it, or does it still smell like me?"

Steve goes quiet for a moment, his cheeks and his nose pink, and he rests his chin against the back of his hand as it lays across Billy's chest. He bites the inside of his cheek, gaze skirting over Billy's face, and he feels a bit like when Billy had asked him if he could mark him.

Like the next words out of his mouth will change everything.

“It still smells like you,” Steve says, soft and honest in his admission, knowing it tells *too much* .

Jesus , Billy thinks. He feels lucky and warm and suddenly a little *too full* of affection. It pulls him under, threatening to drown him with its weight.

“Good,” Billy says, instead of anything sappier, anything more dangerous or forthcoming. He pulls Steve tight and wrangles him down against the sheets again. “I’d hate to have to scent it again,” he says, against the hollow of Steve’s throat, though he knows he’ll do just that before he walks out the door again.

He’ll drag the thick wool over his own throat and make sure Steve can’t forget him, even for a moment.

8. you never felt this way

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNING: feelings and shit; Billy Hargrove's hands; pool shenanigans; gentle bois.

In the weeks that follow that hazy afternoon, spent in Steve's bed exploring each other with hands, with mouths, with teeth, Steve finds himself growing increasingly more frustrated with the fact that he can't walk up to Billy, whenever he wants, and kiss him stupid.

They had spent the hours until Billy had to leave to pick up Max tangled together across Steve's sheets. Billy's hands had been hot and big and *everywhere* -- smoothing along Steve's chest and stomach; trailing down his thighs and to his calves, as he'd kissed the inside of Steve's knee; dragging back up over his arms and to his wrists, where he'd curled his fingers and pinned Steve down, both of them hard again and breathing into each other's mouths as they rocked and rutted to completion.

When Steve had knotted again, Billy had teased him with that sharp grin, but his eyes had been so blue and pleased and eager. He'd wrapped his fist around Steve's knot and stroked him with the mess of their own come, until Steve had clawed down his back and come again across his fingers, until his knot had finally diminished, until Steve had said Billy's name like a benediction.

Steve had been too embarrassed for words. But Billy had kissed him, long and heavy and slow, and told him he was *fucking perfect* .

After Billy had said he had to go, Steve had laid in bed, propped on his elbows and watched as Billy had dressed. Watched as Billy had eyed him, still naked and splayed out, like all he wanted to do was crawl back into bed with him. Watched as Billy had hesitated before stalking back over to the bed, to Steve, ducked down and placed his mouth over the healing mark on Steve's neck with a promise of *next time* . Watched as he pulled away and then blatantly, shamelessly, scent marked Steve's wool coat again before leaving.

But since then, since that afternoon, Steve and Billy haven't had a chance for *next time.* Either Steve had been busy with the kids, or class, or plans with Nancy and Jonathan-- or Billy had been busy with Max, or basketball, or homework, or his thriving social life.

It's not that they haven't *stolen time* , stolen moments, in between. The time when they'd both been at the arcade a little early, and it was already dark, and Billy had pulled Steve into the cab of his Camaro to make out with him for the few minutes they could spare. The touches they would share in the halls, barely there but just enough. The burning looks and the teasing-- *christ* , the *teasing* -- the way Billy would crowd him at his locker, appearing to the whole world that he was just putting Steve in his place, at least one rung below Billy, and would say the most *filthy things ever* in Steve's ear until he *burned* .

So, it's not like they haven't stolen seconds and minutes and moments. It's just that it hasn't been *enough* .

It's just that Billy is grinning at him, over the head of some beta girl twirling her hair up at him, tongue pink between his teeth as he eyes Steve's jeans and black cotton shirt and green bomber jacket, and he *winks* . It's that Steve can't drop what's in his arms, walk down the hall, and shove Billy against the lockers and kiss that smug look right off of his face.

Next to him, Nancy snorts. "He's not subtle."

Steve blinks down at her, feels something creep across the back of his neck as he follows her to her locker. "What do you mean?"

"The posturing," Nancy replies, and Steve feels a wash of relief as he leans his shoulder against the lockers and she opens hers up to trade out her textbooks. "He's like, the epitome of *alpha male* stereotypes. And not in a good way."

Steve's face scrunches up. "I'm an alpha male."

"Yeah, but--" Nancy glances at him, her eyes big, her smile small. "You're like Jonathan. What an alpha *should* be-- not what society dictates they are."

Shifting on his feet, Steve shrugs a shoulder. “I was. There for a while. And-- I mean, Hargrove’s not all bad.”

Nancy purses her lips and stares at him. Steve thinks maybe he shouldn’t have said that.

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” she says, and turns back to her things. “So, do you have any plans for the weekend?”

“What a funny coincidence,” a voice says from behind Steve, and Steve feels the heat of him, smells the heady spice of him, before he even twists around to look at where Billy is leaning, hand planted against the lockers. “I was just about to ask the same thing.”

“Billy,” Steve says, in lieu of a greeting.

Billy is all teeth, grinning wide at both Nancy and Steve. He’s so close to Steve, and looking the epitome of a posturing alpha male.

“Harrington,” Billy says. “Wheeler.”

He raises his eyebrows, eyes on the prize.

“So? What’re your plans, pretty boy?”

Steve mirrors the look, brows arching, and he leans back against the lockers. “Currently? Up in the air. Why? Is there some rager I should be aware of?”

“I heard there was a little get together going on at the quarry,” Billy says, with a devilish grin. He glances at Nancy, gives her a once over, and then frowns. “An invite-only thing.”

Nancy snaps her locker shut with a little scoff, leveling Billy a dry look before glancing at Steve. “I have to get to class.”

Steve thinks this is when he’s supposed to push off the lockers, ditch Billy’s looming frame, and walk with her. But he doesn’t move.

“I’ll see you at lunch?” he asks.

Nancy blinks, and her eyes dart between him and Billy before she

nods, and gives a queer smile, brows furrowed. “Don’t get up to too much trouble until then.”

“I’ll try not,” Steve says, and then he freezes as she leans up onto her toes to press a kiss to his cheek.

“Later, Steve.” She says, meets Billy’s eyes as she draws away, and plasters on a bright smile. “Hargrove.”

And then she’s walking away, down the hall, away from them.

Billy watches her go, mouth twisted into a crooked grin. He turns back to Steve and licks his lips. “So, how about it, pretty boy? You, me, and the quarry?”

“For the whole weekend?” Steve asks, playfully dumb. “Sounds like it could get cold. Should I bring a sleeping bag?”

For a moment, it looks like Billy’s going to lean in and kiss Steve. He looks hungry and amused in equal measure; consumed by it. But he doesn’t.

Instead, he just presses his hand to Steve’s neck, like he’s trying to make him go down. It doesn’t *feel* like that, though. It feels closer, more intimate than that. Like Billy’s trying to make up for the fact that he *can’t* kiss Steve.

“Well. If your parents aren’t around…” Billy smirks, but then, like he’s remembering something, his face goes a little sour. “I was thinking Friday night. Maybe Saturday. By Sunday, I’m gonna be a little, uh.” The tips of Billy’s ears go a little pink. “A little indisposed.”

Steve’s throat works against the heat of Billy’s palm, and he can feel his thumb against his pulse. He almost arches into it, almost forgets himself with the heat that finds its way between his joints and his bones.

“Indisposed?” he asks, wetting his lips and shifting his weight so he doesn’t slide right to the floor.

Billy is getting redder and looking flushed and -- well, not necessarily

embarrassed , but something close to it.

“My rut’s coming up, pretty boy.” Billy grins through the words, pushing past whatever he’s feeling and finding that place of calm self-confidence he usually projects.

“Oh,” Steve blinks, standing up a little straighter. “Oh. Right. Yeah. Indisposed.”

But his head is already running away with Billy’s words. Wondering what Billy would smell like, in rut. If his scent would get richer, deeper-- or if it would carry different notes to it.

“Well,” Steve clears his throat. “My parents won’t be home until sometime next week-- currently, anyway. So. You could come over before.”

He pauses. Hesitates. Then holds Billy’s eyes.

“Or during,” Steve says. “If you want. Unless-- I mean, unless you’re spending it-- Unless you’ve got other plans for it.”

Billy swallows. Steve can see his throat work with it. Billy’s eyes go dark and heavy. “You sure you’d really want that?”

After a second, Billy lets his thumb smooth over the skin on Steve’s throat.

“I’d love to spend it with you,” Billy says, clarifying. “I usually spend it alone. I don’t want you to have to deal with me all weekend. It’s -- intense.”

“Intense?”

Something about the way Billy says the word makes Steve *shiver* . His eyes burn over Billy’s face, and he tilts his head over, just a little, not quite baring his throat-- but giving Billy a good look at where his mark has completely disappeared.

“Think I can’t handle you?” Steve asks.

Billy’s eyes are trained on Steve’s neck. He’s breathing heavier now,

like he's about to start panting through his mouth, like he's just come back from a hard run. Like he's just chased Steve and *won* .

"I have every confidence you can." Billy swallows. "And god, I want you to. I want you to handle me."

Heat suffuses through Steve. Burns through his veins and scorches along his nerves. Until his breath feels hot and heavy. Until he feels like he might be too hot to touch.

He reaches up, curling his fingers around Billy's wrist, as the school bell rings. He squeezes, and pulls his hand away.

"My place," Steve says, voice low, and it's hot too, with promise. "Friday. For as long as you like."

And as much as he wishes he could lean in and seal that promise with a kiss, he can't. But he catches Billy's fingers in his, briefly enough to be fleeting, but pointed enough for Billy to feel.

And then he's pulling away, backing down the hall. "See you later, Hargrove."

Billy watches him go, as he turns away, and probably until he rounds the corner for class.

-*-

The week is a blur.

Billy is kept busy with a rush of exams at school, hours of basketball practice, and a towering stack of household repairs on top of his regular chores. Susan had wanted to repaint the kitchen, so Neil had volunteered Billy for the job instead of paying someone more qualified. Of course, that gets top priority, so Billy has to wake up early nearly every day to squeeze homework and studying in between all the spaces between minutes. He gets to school early --much to Max's chagrin, as that means she does too-- and goes home late. He falls, exhausted, into bed way too far into the nights, and pries himself up and out from under the covers way too early. Three coats of paint and very little sleep later, and the kitchen is a beautiful yellow and next week, Susan wants to restain the cabinets.

It's never ending.

By Friday, Billy's running on fumes.

He doesn't even *see* Harrington at school during the day, but he's too exhausted to even consider verifying their plans. Billy's already told Neil he's got plans for the weekend, so if needs be, he'll just book it to the *Twilight* motel on the edge of town and ride out his rut alone.

"Where are you going this weekend?" Max asks, as Billy drives her home from school on Friday afternoon. His bags are packed in the back the Camaro, and he's already told her she's on her own in regards to rides to the arcade on Saturday or Sunday.

"I'm having a slumber party," Billy says, voice deliberately too sing-song for sincerity.

"You could just *tell me* ," Max says with a huff. "You don't have to be a dick about it."

Billy laughs and laughs, and turns up Alice Cooper's *Poison* until Max swats his hand away from the radio.

He blinks and finds himself at Steve's house, not even entirely sure how he got there. His go-bag is slung over his shoulder and his finger is on the doorbell and -- yikes, maybe he shouldn't have been driving so fast after dropping Max off. At least, he *probably* was driving fast, since he always drives fast, but he doesn't remember.

Unsure if he's actually rung the bell or not, Billy gives it another two presses, turning to scan Steve's yard and his driveway. The Beemer is parked in the driveway, so Steve is probably home. Good. That's good. It settles something that's been crawling around in Billy's stomach, nervous and uneasy and too anxious for his own liking.

Both doors swing open when Steve answers. He's still wearing what he wore to school, if the pastel polo and khakis are anything to judge by, too preppy for his own good-- but his feet are bare and his shirt sleeves are rolled up past his elbows.

He smiles when he sees Billy. "You came."

Steve looks soft. He sounds it, too. Desperately, Billy wants nothing more than to fold himself into that warm comfort and sleep for days. But he won't -- too stubborn to give into such a stupidly saccharine impulse. And he also *can't* -- he can already start to feel the energy building up in his body. In a little while, he'll likely be unable to keep still. He always vacillates between exhausted and restless before a rut, like his body's storing up energy and it doesn't quite know what to do with it, yet.

"I did. Surprised?" Billy asks, leaning on the door frame with one arm. "Are you gonna invite me in?"

Something mischievous and bright settles onto Steve's face-- in his eyes and around his mouth. He doesn't invite Billy in, but he does reach out and grab him by the front of his shirt, reeling him through the doors and shutting them behind him.

He leans in and catches Billy's mouth with his own the second they're safely secluded away, and Steve presses so fully into him that he has to drop his bag to keep from stumbling back. His hands go to Steve's hips, but-- really-- he's just holding on for the ride. Because Steve licks his way into Billy's mouth, kisses him long and hard and breathless, and then pulls away as quickly as he started.

"I've wanted to do that all week," Steve says, and then his face is flushing and he's stepping back, like he's embarrassed by his own forwardness, his own honesty. "Beer?"

Billy would be lying if he said he hadn't been fantasizing about kissing Steve all goddamn week, too. It's easy to fall into it now, especially now that he's verging close to something he would very much not like to call *needy* -- but totally is, anyway. He nearly chases Steve's mouth after he pulls away, but catches himself, at least a little.

"Beer sounds good."

Billy follows Steve into the kitchen, after throwing his bag by the stairs.

"I told Max I was having a slumber party. She didn't believe me,"

Billy says, leaning on counter -- only to sprawl himself out over it after a moment, enjoying the cool press of marble against flush skin. He's not entirely feverish yet, and he won't be for at least another day, but he *is* running a little warm. And the kiss did nothing to cool him off.

"Oh?" Steve peers back at him over his shoulder as he digs into the fridge, pulling out two beers and sliding one over the island to him before cracking his open. "But I ordered pizza and everything. There might even be scary movies in our future that our parents wouldn't approve of."

Billy hums, grabbing the beer before it can slide to a stop. He pops it open and takes a long drink.

"Pretty sure my dad would disapprove of all of this," he says, but the words aren't heavy with anything -- just a simple statement of fact.

Around Steve, right now, he doesn't feel burdened by his father's disapproval. He's too content, too excited.

"I think we need to work the pool somewhere into there. You mentioned a pool, and I'm gonna feel conned if I don't get in it at least once this weekend."

Steve gestures with his head toward the living room. "It's out back. I don't use it often, but it's clean and in working order, so. Did you want to see it?"

"Obviously," Billy says, and follows Steve to go look at the pool.

It's just like Billy imagined -- inviting and sleek and expensive-looking. Nothing like the public pools he grew up going in, when his mom didn't want to drive to the ocean.

"Impressive," Billy says, with a little nod as he takes a sip of the beer. His hand finds Steve's lower back. "I didn't bring swim trunks. Are they a requirement?"

Can your neighbors see us , he means.

Steve hesitates, and his eyes are forward, looking out into the woods

behind his property. He skims the trees, takes a pull from the can in his hand, and then glances at Billy.

“There’s nothing but you, me, and the back forty acres of Indiana wilderness.” Steve says. “They’re definitely not a requirement. Unless you’re suddenly shy.”

“Yeah, because I *love* wearing clothes around you,” Billy says. “But about that pizza…”

Billy is ravenous, his body already starting to burn through calories in preparation for a lot of exerted effort in the coming days.

A thought hits him, and he grins, spinning to look at Steve. “Can we eat the pizza while *in the pool?”*

It’s a little childish, a little giddy -- but he kinda loves the idea. His grin is wide, and it must be infectious, because it doesn’t take long for Steve to grin right back at him.

“The second it gets here,” Steve laughs. “I’ll go get us some towels-- and maybe my radio?”

It sounds like an offer, but he’s already backing away. He leaves the sliding door open, between the house and the backyard, and disappears inside.

When Steve comes back, Billy’s sitting by the side of the pool, his legs dangling into the warm water of it, jeans messily rolled up. His socks and sneakers are off, tossed to the side -- and his shirt has been abandoned, too, in an effort to try and regulate his temperature. The warm water feels good, but he’s already running a little hot. So, it eases his muscles, but doesn’t do much to cool him off. The beer helps, though, so he takes another long sip of it and lolls his head to watch Steve approach again.

“Hi,” Billy says, feeling truly content, for the first time this week.

Steve sets two rolled towels down on one of the pool chairs, placing a small radio on the table and clicking it on to a station that’s playing rock. Something by the Stones is droning, but Steve doesn’t turn it up too loud, like he’s keeping his ear out for the doorbell or

something else.

He idles over to where Billy is sitting with his feet in the pool, and the rest of the six pack is dangling from his fingers. Settling down next to him, Steve smiles again, that same soft and bright smile he'd greeted him at the door with, and he starts rolling up the bottom of his khakis.

"Hi," he says back, Mick Jagger crooning from the radio.

"These are some fancy digs you got here, pretty boy. Careful, or a guy like me'll get used to them."

Billy doesn't want to get used to them, in a strange way. He's already comfortable here, in Steve's space -- whether or not they're in Steve's ritzy house or not. It's dangerous, getting as attached as Billy already feels. But he can't *help it* , it's in his nature -- at least, kinda. Alphas are supposed to get attached and protective and tied down. He knows that, biologically. But that's only with omegas -- otherwise, society says that alphas are meant to be strong loners. Aloof and uncaring.

It was an easy image to uphold, before Billy met Steve.

Now, the allure of *this* kind of time with Steve is strangely addictive.

"You look like a dork," Billy says, kicking at Steve's feet a little, once they're in the water. "Such a prep."

"You're complaining about my fashion again," Steve huffs, but there's still that smile on his face. "Like I care what your opinion is when *you* wear denim on denim."

"I make denim on denim look *good* ."

Billy finishes off his beer and grabs another, hooking that six-pack a little closer with his fingers.

"So, what'd you end up telling Wheeler you were doing over the weekend?" Billy asks.

"I didn't," Steve shrugs a shoulder, sipping his beer and leaning back on a hand. "Told her I wanted to take some time for myself, she got

all worried about me spending the weekend holed up in my house alone, and I told her I'd call if I needed. So."

"Poor you, spending the weekend all alone in this big house of yours," Billy says, tilting his head at Steve with a grin. He runs his tongue over his lips. "What on earth you going to do with yourself all weekend?"

Steve falters a little, like maybe Billy's teasing actually stung him a little, but then his eyes drag down over Billy-- over his shoulders, down his chest, across all of the skin Billy has on display. "I dunno," he says, then meets Billy's eyes again. "I'm sure I'll find someway to entertain myself."

"You seem pretty resourceful," Billy says.

And god, he's seen the ways Steve is dedicated to causes, the way he's happy to press forward, even when he doesn't know exactly what he's doing. Billy is *well aware* that Steve is resourceful.

"I have every faith you'll keep yourself entertained."

"I guess the only question is what you'll do to keep yourself entertained," Steve says, a little coy. "If I'm so busy entertaining myself, I don't know if I'll have time to be a proper host."

Billy huffs out a laugh. "Pretty sure the host is supposed to entertain me, too. Isn't that like, common etiquette?"

Billy raises his eyebrows and holds Steve's look until Billy cracks, hiding his spreading grin by taking a sip of beer.

"I'm just supposed to sit here and look pretty," Billy says. "But, hm. That's usually *your* job."

"Are you implying I don't look pretty, right now?" Steve presses a hand to his chest, like the idea alone hurts him.

Billy makes a face, like he's thinking about it. Like Steve Harrington somehow *isn't* the prettiest damn thing Billy has ever laid eyes on. Then, he leans in and kisses Steve. It's a soft, fleeting thing. More affectionate than heated.

“You’re always pretty,” Billy says, when he pulls back.

Steve’s expression goes soft at the edges. The teasing, the playfulness, leaves him for something far more earnest. He almost looks a little awed, lips parted, eyes flitting over Billy’s face, like he’s looking for something there.

Then, he leans in, hands braced on the edge of the pool and kisses Billy again. Slower, softer, like it’s fragile. Like the moment might break any second.

It’s too soft, Billy thinks. He’s never really had something like this before in his life, never felt a moment so delicate. But he doesn’t pull back, doesn’t let himself back away. He just folds into it, like he wanted to on Steve’s doorstep. He takes Harrington’s lead, fighting the urge to make the kiss harder or faster or rougher. Instead, he just slides his fingers into Steve’s hair and hums, content.

Steve slides a bit closer. Until their knees touch, until his left foot bumps against Billy’s right in the warm water, until his shoulder knocks against Billy’s.

He kisses Billy like he’s trying to memorize him. Like he’s trying to savor it. Catching Billy’s lower lip between his own, tongue sliding against it, just to taste him, not even trying to deepen it when Billy’s mouth opens for him. Kissing the corner of his mouth, instead, and then his cheek, a hand coming up to slide along Billy’s jaw, his fingers cold from being wrapped around the beer can.

Billy sets his own beer can down, just like Steve had, so that he can get his other hand on Steve’s neck. The whole moment is brutally charged, filled with desire and treacherous hope. Billy can only take so much of it.

So, he moans, and kisses Steve a little deeper, a little more distracting. Then, he wraps his arms around Steve like he’s just getting a better hold, like he’s working himself closer in the moment. Then, Billy twists a little -- and throws himself backward -- tipping into the water with a splash. His arms are tight around Steve, dragging him into the pool with him, laughing against Steve’s lips as he goes.

Steve comes up sputtering, shoving at Billy's shoulders, but he's laughing too. "You're such an asshole," he says, kicking his feet, and he pushes down on Billy's shoulders until Billy's under the water and Steve's sliding from his grip.

Childish delight, pure and unadulterated fills him. He's brimming with it, with amusement and energy and affection. He surges up from the water and throws himself at Steve, and they shove at each other for a while, lost in the game of it, in the glee of the moment.

Eventually, Billy ends up wrapping around Steve from behind. He had gone in, originally, to throw him, but once his arms are around Steve, his head nosing at Steve's neck, Billy finds he can't let go. He just holds on for a little while and makes a noise in Steve's ear.

"Hi," Billy finally says, panting and still half-laughing.

Steve squirms a little, chuckling as he curls his fingers around Billy's forearms, and he lets his head lull back against Billy's shoulder, meeting his eyes as they wade together in the pool, toes barely brushing the bottom, light reflecting blue off the surface and onto their faces. "Hey," he replies, hair slicked back, eyes wrinkling at the corners.

The water is warm and comforting around them. It reminds Billy a bit of the ocean, of warm days in the surf.

"I used to swim all the time," he tells Steve, nosing at Steve's waterlogged hair.

It feels weirdly important, giving that small part of himself to Steve. Even if it's just a couple words, it feels like a huge part of Billy, of who he is as a person. His love of the ocean and his fundamental grief over not having it anymore. Usually, he just doesn't let himself think about it.

"I used to go to the beach every Saturday with my mom," Billy hears himself say, like, now that he's started on this bullshit, he just can't stop. Like there's a crack in the dam and now all the water's going to come trickling out, whether he wants it to or not.

“You miss it,” Steve says, and it isn’t a question.

He twists his head over a little bit, leans to the side, so that he can meet Billy’s eyes more easily. His hands are soft on his arms-- fingers long and delicate, like he’s never seen a day of hard labor, but that doesn’t seem quite right-- and he slides them over Billy’s forearms in soothing, smooth strokes.

“California. The ocean. Going with your mom.” Steve says, and the radio on the table by the pool is playing something by Bob Dylan; it sounds like *Tangled Up in Blue* . “You miss it.”

Billy huffs out a laugh, like it’s a joke. Like maybe, if he laughs a little, he won’t suddenly feel all torn up inside. “Gee, pretty boy, you make it sound like a real tearjerker.”

And well, maybe it kind of is. Billy tries not to think about what his life was like years ago, when his mom was still alive. Times with his dad had never been good, but times with just her, just Billy and his mom, were always picture perfect. They didn’t get tons of time together, just the two of them out from under Neil’s protective thumb, but Saturdays were almost always theirs, free and easy and full of sunny warmth, until they had to come home again.

Steve hums and turns in Billy’s arms, until they’re chest to chest. Until he’s draping his arms over Billy’s shoulders and curving a hand at Billy’s nape, cupping the base of his head, thumb brushing beneath his ear.

“Tell me about it,” Steve leans in, kissing the corner of Billy’s mouth. “California. The ocean. All of that-- everything. Tell me about it.”

Part of Billy doesn’t want to. Not because he doesn’t want to share it, but because he fears the way his voice could break, the way his eyes might tear up.

But he does anyway.

“I grew up next to the ocean,” Billy says, leaning against the solid weight of Steve’s hand. Here, surrounded by water and held tightly in Steve’s arms, he can’t feel the crushing weight of the loss. It feels too

close to home, too comforting.

He tells Steve about the wind, the way it always smelled like salt and fresh air. How, when the storms would roll in across the Pacific, it would smell like lightning and static electricity. How everything always smelled like new life.

He tells Steve about learning how to swim, about how his mom taught him to paddle out past the waves and just float on the rolling water. How out there, past the breakers, you could just let time pass like it meant nothing at all.

He tells Steve about the coastal highway, how they'd drive out it and find new beaches, new places to share. They'd pack a lunch, just the two of them, and share peanut butter and banana sandwiches with their toes in the still-damp sand.

Billy stops himself after a while, realizing that he's buried his face in Steve's neck for the last few minutes and has just been mumbling about stepping on weird slimy things and how Steve would probably hate it.

"The pizza should be here soon, right?" Billy manages, past the tightness in his chest.

Steve nods, arms still wrapped around him, thumb still stroking at that spot just below Billy's ear. As if by fate, through the open sliding glass door, they hear the doorbell ring.

"Speak of the devil," Steve mutters, and if his mouth lingers at Billy's temple as he pulls away, Billy doesn't call him on it. "Still wanna eat in the pool?"

There is literally nothing that could drag Billy out of this pool right now. Not one single force of nature. Not even a yelling, screaming, gun-wielding Neil Hargrove himself.

"Absolutely," Billy says, and pulls a smile out of somewhere.

It's not that he's not content, but he can't quite help but admit that he feels a little raw, right now. Like a layer of him has been peeled off and exposed. It feels good, in a way, but unfamiliar and strange.

“Do you need help getting it, or…?” Billy asks, unsure how exactly to *say* that he doesn’t want to leave the comfort of the pool. He doesn’t want Steve to leave, either, but the pizza is here and it’s gotta be gotten, somehow.

Steve shakes his head, with a little grin, and backs away. “I think I can handle it.”

Hauling himself out of the pool at the edge, water sluices down off of him and spills out onto the pavement. He makes a disgruntled sound as he makes his way to his feet, and Billy would put money on the fact that his nose is wrinkled up in annoyance as he plucks at his soaked polo.

Billy watches, as he strips it over his head, and isn’t surprised when-- instead of throwing it down to the ground-- Steve takes the time to hang it flat over the back of one of the chairs. He snatches up one of the towels, offering Billy a smile over his shoulder, before taking off into the house, half-naked and soaked, toweling his hair as he goes.

While Steve gets the pizza, Billy putters in the pool. As he does some laps, he imagines the pizza guy laughing at Steve’s soaked khakis, imagines the way Steve flushes a little at the situation. It feels good to work off a little bit of his extra energy. It’s not the best pool for laps, but Billy swims them easy and slow, just enough to work his muscles, to push the fog of grief a little further away.

When Steve comes back, Billy is leaning against the side of the pool, dangling on his elbows and already working on a fresh can of beer.

“Fancy seeing you here,” Billy says.

Steve snorts, but eases to the ground, legs tucked up under him. His khakis are still plastered to his thighs, and Steve sets the two pizza boxes at the edge of the pool before dragging a beer for himself over.

“We’ve gotta stop meeting like this,” Steve says, draping his towel around his shoulders, grinning down at him.

Billy lets his eyes drag over Steve’s body for a moment, feeling hungry and indulgent.

“I can’t say I mind.”

“Shut up and pick your poison,” Steve huffs, but he’s ducking his head to hide a smile, cracking open a new beer and drinking slow. “I got everything and then I got a meat lovers. Wasn’t sure what you liked.”

“What if I was just a simple cheese guy?” Billy asks, dragging the boxes even closer. Like he’s gonna hoard them all to himself.

But he’s not just a simple cheese guy. He’ll eat just about anything and both of the pizzas smell to die for. Maybe he’s just hungry. Or maybe Steve has good taste. Regardless, he picks up a slice of everything, folds it in half, and takes a giant bite, groaning around it, starved.

He chews for a moment, then looks up at Steve’s face. He looks amused and happy, and Billy can’t help but smile a little. “Shut up. Eat.” All said with his mouth full.

Steve gives a little two fingered salute, then drags open the other box. He pulls out a large slice and digs in, unfolding his legs so one of his feet can dangle in the water, and leaning back on a hand.

They stay like that for a while, the radio singing low in the otherwise companionable quiet. They finish one box and make decent headway on the other. They finish the beers.

When the sun starts to dip in the sky, Steve squints up at it, mouth pressing thin. He’s since dipped back into the water with Billy, had since shed his pants, and he’s propped back on his elbows at the edge as the blue in the sky starts to fade into hues of pink and purple.

“Billy,” Steve says as Billy’s telling him the music he would listen to at the boardwalk, and Steve doesn’t look at him, but there’s a tension around his shoulders as he tips his head back and looks up. “Thanks for telling me all that. Earlier.”

“Yeah,” Billy says.

He thinks of saying *it slipped out, I didn’t mean to* , but he knows Steve wouldn’t appreciate it. It’d be a lie, too. Yeah, he hadn’t necessarily

meant to start telling Steve about all of it, but he did. And he feels better for it. Like there's a little more between them, now.

"Tit for tat, though, Harrington. If you think I didn't see that picture of you in a boy scout uniform in your foyer, you're shit out of luck."

But Billy doesn't wait to hear an answer, because he doesn't want to drag information out of Steve that isn't freely given. Instead, he hauls himself out of the pool. At some point, his pants had been kicked off as well, so he just eases himself out of the water, free and clear of anything but soaking wet briefs.

"Were you kidding about the horror movies?" Billy asks, draping a towel over himself as he watches Steve climb out of the pool, all easy and nimble, like he's done it a thousand times.

Steve wraps a towel around his hips, crouching to clean up the mess they'd left, gathering up beer cans and the boxes, but leaving their clothes out to dry. "Only if you aren't a fan of John Carpenter. In which case, I may need to ask you to leave."

Marry me , Billy murmurs against the towel as he drags it over his face and his hair, trying to dry off the sodden mess that he is. "Glad I'm not getting kicked to the curb just yet, then."

Billy follows Steve inside, trailing after them as they go up to Steve's room after dropping the remnants of dinner in the kitchen. Billy hitches his bag over his shoulder and tosses it on Steve's bed.

Steve tosses sweatpants at him before he can even think to dig in his own bag for clothes. "What, you want me to smell like your property?" Billy says, raising his eyebrows. But he slides off his briefs, towels himself off, and slides the pants over his legs, pleased to be wearing something of Steve's. "How very alpha of you."

When he looks back up, Steve has slid his own pants on and pulled a sweater that looks ten years old and is stretched and worn and absolutely ridiculous looking, but Steve is staring at him, head cocked to the side, with dark eyes. "I like it when you smell like me."

“Yeah?” Billy says, feeling a little heat start to kick up in his chest, like a spark igniting.

Billy spreads his arms out, showing his torso off, exposing himself to Steve -- an open invitation.

“Come on then, pretty boy. Get your smell all over me.”

Steve makes a little sound and takes an aborted step forward. His eyes map out a trail, down Billy’s neck and across his shoulders, along his arms and down his chest to his abdomen. Then, after retracing it back up, Steve pads closer and into Billy’s space.

He presses his palms flat against Billy’s chest and lets them rest there. His eyes are on the contrast of their own skin, of his fingers splayed out against Billy’s skin, and then he drags his hands up to his shoulders, fingers kneading into the muscle there and then smoothing down over his biceps.

Billy shivers into Steve’s touch, pressing back against the weight of Steve’s hands. It’s nice, feeling Steve’s hands on him -- even nicer, still, knowing that he’ll come out of this moment smelling even more like Steve. There’s something so instinctual about it, something incredibly heady and important -- like a concept a little bigger than himself, something Billy just can’t quite grasp.

Steve’s eyes finally come back up to meet Billy’s, his hands methodical and slow, and he gestures with his chin toward Billy’s neck. “Can I scent you there, too?”

Like a strange fantasy, Billy imagines it. It’s not like Steve has never nosed at his neck before in a heated moment -- but -- generally, he’s been pretty careful about Billy’s neck. Probably because Billy’s been equally careful about keeping it guarded.

It’s one thing for Billy to scent Steve’s neck, to sink his teeth in there -- it’s another for Steve to.

But it’s not, really -- is it?

It’s the same goddamn thing, Billy thinks. And he can’t just say no and expect for things to stay the same. He’s not sure he *wants* to say

no, either.

“Yeah, I mean…” Billy says. He swallows and takes a long breath. “Go for it.”

With a great deal of care, Steve eases his hands back up to curl loosely over the crook of his neck on either side. He drags his thumbs against the sides of his throat, head tilting, and eyes focused on the skin of Billy’s neck.

After a moment, he slides one of his hands back to Billy’s nape, like he had earlier in the pool, and he shuffles closer, until they’re flush with one another. He braces his other hand on the curve of Billy’s shoulder and ducks his head, nose dragging against Billy’s rapid pulse. He follows it with his cheek, and then places a single, lingering kiss to the side of Billy’s throat.

“There,” he says when he pulls back, voice barely more than his breath, eyes warm and only for Billy. “Now, you smell like mine.”

Billy thinks that maybe, just maybe, his legs are going to collapse underneath him. He feels heavy and unsteady, and his gaze feels blurry as hell when he looks back at Steve when Steve pulls away. Billy blinks, but it doesn’t get much better. He still feels dizzy and washed out, like all of his senses are screaming at him, yet everything is just too far away.

“Yeah,” Billy says.

Idly, he realizes that his hands are grabbing onto Steve’s arms for a hold, an anchor. He doesn’t let go though, he can’t.

Billy’s never let anyone *do that* before.

It’s frightening, how much he liked it. How much he wants *more* of it. How he missed Steve, the second he pulled away.

How much he hungered for the feeling of teeth, right up against his neck.

Steve strokes below his ear again, giving his nape a little squeeze, and he leans in and presses their foreheads together. Until they’re

just breathing the same air.

“Movie?” he asks, a bit tentative, brow creasing a little. “I’ve got *Halloween* and *The Thing* .”

“Sure,” Billy says. He leans against Steve’s hand, feeling too centered, too comfortable. “Either. You pick.”

All Billy wants to do is curl up next to Steve and drown himself in the way they smell, combined. Thick and heady and a lot like chlorine.

“Well,” Steve grins, a bit crooked and a bit lopsided, but he doesn’t move from Billy’s hands or his space, their foreheads still resting together, their voices hushed. “Considering I babysit a lot these days, I try to avoid the movies where some guy in a mask shows up with a knife. And I like Kurt Russell.”

“ *The Thing* it is,” Billy says.

He takes one more breath of their air mingling, and then pulls back. Immediately, Billy feels the loss of Steve. Jesus, it’s bad. He blame the rut, blames his instincts, blames the way he wants to sink his teeth into Steve’s neck and have the same thing in return.

“Come on, pretty boy. Let’s get this show on the road.”

9. no, I don't wanna fall in love

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNING: general explicit rut content; minor breeding kink; Billy goddamn Hargrove's filthy goddamn mouth; blissed out, gorgeous Steve Harrington; so. much. sex. we thought it was almost too much sex; mentions of past dubious consent; god, yes, multiple orgasms

Steve wakes in the same place he fell asleep: curled up on the couch with Billy Hargrove. Though, there is a distinct lack of Billy Hargrove and a distinct smell of bacon in the air when he turns over, uncurling from beneath the throw blanket he'd draped over them both the night before.

They'd made it through *The Thing* , at least, and a bowl of popcorn, before Billy had started to drift off. Tired, obviously, from the week and from an afternoon of what Steve can only describe as vulnerability. The way Billy had curled into him in the pool, talking about the sea and his mother, like he was cracking himself open to do it, had filled Steve with such a deep, sympathetic sorrow that he didn't know what else to do but hold him. The way Billy had let Steve press his mouth to his throat and scent him and call him *mine* .

Steve hadn't wanted to move him. Wake him. He looked so at peace, head lulled back against the corner of the couch. So Steve had strewn a blanket over them both and tucked in close, nose pressed up under Billy's jaw, and he'd drifted off to the sound of Billy breathing. To the feeling of his heart beating beneath his palm.

It was absolutely stupid. Absolutely dangerous. Steve thinks he can see the heartbreak coming from a mile away, but he did it anyway.

He'd woken, at one point, sometime before dawn, to Billy muscling him down properly onto the couch. To the heat of him draping over Steve's body, and Steve had sleepily wrapped himself around him and held on tight so that Billy couldn't get away.

Apparently, at least, until well after the sun rose.

Blinking, Steve pushes up from the couch, blanket draped over his shoulders and smelling overwhelmingly like the both of them. Half-awake, hair a mess, and padding into the kitchen where he can hear Billy humming, he rubs his cheek against the soft blanket and revels in the scent. Too tired to be ashamed about it.

“What’re you doing?” he asks when he stops at the counter, seeing Billy in front of his stove, and his brows furrow over his eyes when he spots the pots and pans. “Are you cooking?”

Billy turns and Steve’s eyes linger on the way the sweatpants hang low on his hips, hugging the subtle curve of him, of his muscles. They’re a little tight, but in a nice sort of way, a way that Steve certainly doesn’t mind looking at.

“Nah, I’m playing piano,” Billy says, flipping a batch of pancakes.

Billy looks at Steve and just *smiles* , eyes lingering on Steve’s hair, on the blanket draped over his shoulders, and on his bare chest. And on Steve’s face.

“You’ve got some lines,” Billy says with a smile, his hand tracing some patterns over his own face, pointing out presumably some creases on Steve’s face from falling asleep on a blanket.

Face coloring, Steve shuffles in more, wrapping the blanket around himself and squinting down at the frying pan where bacon is popping and sizzling. “Can’t remember the last time I slept that hard. Or the last time someone made food for me.”

His eyes dart up to Billy’s. His face colors a little deeper when he catches Billy’s arched brow-- inquiring but not necessarily pressing.

“I’m home by myself a lot,” Steve shrugs, looking back down, like he’s ashamed of that fact; he is, a little, and he remembers Billy’s words from yesterday-- *poor you, alone in your big house* -- and thinks viciously, jaw winding up: *poor little rich boy* . “Though, sometimes Dustin’s mom sends me home with leftovers.”

Billy just hums. He doesn’t say anything to make fun of Steve alone

in the house. Either he realizes his misstep from yesterday, or he's just aware of Steve's current tone and knows not to press.

"Well," Billy says, starting on a new batch of pancakes. He tears a piece of bacon in half and holds out one half to Steve, shoving the other into his own mouth. "I'll have to cook for you more then, huh? I'm not great, but --"

Billy trails off and shrugs, like he just realized he invited himself over to Steve's house again. And again.

Steve offers him a little smile and reaches up, taking the bacon and humming as he chews. "As long you don't burn anything, consider yourself hired. Unfortunately, I can only pay you in sexual favors and pool time."

"What about both at the same time? Or is that off the table?" Billy asks with wink, but he goes back to the stove, like he's not too interested in an actual answer.

Steve watches him for a moment, since he's allowed, since Billy's standing in nothing but sweats and cooking in his kitchen. Watches the flex of his shoulders and lets his eyes drift down the slope of his back.

He bites on the inside of his cheek and thinks: *definitely both at the same time and probably on the table, too* .

"You wanna set the table for me?" Billy asks. "It took me like fifteen minutes to find all your cooking stuff."

Steve snorts, but ambles up to one of the cabinets, opening it and pulling out two plates. He gathers what he needs-- silverware and placemats and the soft linen napkins his mom insisted they use with every meal-- and then lingers a second.

Looking is all well and good, but Steve wants to touch, too. Wants to plaster himself against Billy's back and press his face to the crook of his neck.

He settles for padding up, inching in close, and pressing a kiss to Billy's cheek. "Thanks for making breakfast," he says, before pulling

away, before he can interpret the look on Billy's face, and heads for the dining room.

Steve sets his usual spot for himself, and then the one right across from him-- where a guest might usually sit if the other chairs at the table were ever occupied.

"Fancy," Billy says, when Steve comes back in. "I assumed we'd eat at the counter or something."

He pulls Steve back toward him when Steve wanders close enough, and then steals a kiss.

"I like it," Billy says, and then proceeds to nose at Steve's ear, at the start of his neck.

His skin is hot to the touch, warmer than it was yesterday. Not quite feverish and certainly not clammy, but definitely hotter. Enough so that he radiates with it.

Steve can't help but fold himself into that heat. Press himself close and tip his head over a little for him, his hands going to Billy's waist and the warm skin there as the blanket around his shoulders goes loose.

He can already smell it, too. The beginnings of something richer, deeper in Billy's scent. It makes his mouth water, makes him hum and press closer, and he touches his cheek to Billy's.

"Habit," Steve says. "It's either that or in front of the TV."

"Fancy table it is," Billy says.

Breakfast itself is pretty decked out, considering Billy did most of it while Steve was still sleeping. There's pancakes and bacon, eggs and fresh fruit. Even coffee, which both of them greedily devour. Steve eats until he's full and Billy seems to eat impossibly more -- shoving pancake after pancake down the hatch until he's leaning heavy on the table and groaning at Steve that he's eaten too much.

"I'm dying," Billy says, cracking open an eye to look at Steve. "This is it."

Steve laughing into the rim of his mug, one leg tucked up under himself, feeling pretty damn stuffed himself. “Should I call for an ambulance?”

“Nah, just start digging my grave,” Billy says.

He yawns and his eyes fall on the blanket tossed over the back of Steve’s chair.

“We could take a nap,” Billy says, eyes darting in the direction of Steve’s living room, though there’s always the bedroom, too.

Steve likes that idea. He likes that idea an awful lot.

“Bed?” he asks, already pushing to his feet. “We can worry about dishes later.”

“Bed,” Billy agrees, and follows Steve up the stairs.

Once in Steve’s room, Billy shepherds Steve toward the bed until he’s pressing him down against it. With Billy on top of him, it’s impossible not to notice just how *warm* Billy’s gotten. Billy nips at Steve’s jaw once he gets them situated into a position that seems to be acceptable and then curls around Steve, all encompassing.

“We should probably talk about it,” Billy murmurs at Steve’s ear, fingers splaying over Steve’s belly.

Steve shudders. He feels a little hot himself, but it’s probably just talking about Billy gone to lust, to his rut, and the proximity of Billy to his body.

He feels good, though. Warm and content and *excited* . He had sort of assumed that the entire weekend would be filled with stupid, ridiculous orgasms-- not that he was disappointed how yesterday had turned out, not in the least-- but the anticipation was already kind of starting to get to him. He doesn’t do well with waiting for things, makes something anxious build up in him, until he’s consumed with self-doubt.

So talking about it-- talking about it sounds good.

“Okay,” he breathes, hands smoothing up over Billy’s warm skin, fingers cool, hoping to ease some of that heat out of him. “What, uh… You said intense. And I know how *my* rut went. But what should I expect? Do you get aggressive?”

He pauses, thinks about that, and then grins at Billy.

“Well, do you get *more* aggressive?”

Billy grins too, but it’s a bit dopier. A bit more tired. “Shove it.”

There’s something relaxed about Billy, currently. He’s been oscillating between keyed up and relaxed since he arrived, which must be frustrating. It’s like what happened to Steve, like how he had been at the whim of his body and its emotions.

“It probably won’t be as bad as yours was,” Billy says. “I just -- it’s a lot. And I might get pushy or needy and,” Billy pauses, clearly having a hard time with his words.

He’s not the best at talking about things that are even close to emotional, Steve’s found.

“I need you to know,” Billy says. “That you can stop at any time. That I’m still me, and I’ll listen. You’re not obligated to do anything you don’t want to.”

And that’s-- that’s good to know. Though, he can’t imagine Billy wanting to do anything with him that Steve hasn’t already thought about twice over and *wanted* .

Still, worry curls in his stomach, and he tangles a hand into Billy’s hair and coaxes his head back with a gentle pull, head tilted as he stares up at him. “And what about you? What if--? I don’t wanna do anything you don’t want to do. Anything you’ll… regret after.”

Billy makes a sound. Steve isn’t sure exactly what it means, but it sounds a little offended, a little disbelieving. “There’s nothing I’d regret afterwards. I promise.”

Billy takes a breath.

“Look, I have. I’ve regretted it before. I wouldn’t -- I wouldn’t do that again. I know what I want, and it’s you. There will definitely be...no regrets. At all.”

Steve can’t help it. He can’t help but surge up and catch Billy’s mouth with his. It’s a little frantic, a little clumsy, and their teeth click, but Steve-- Steve *has* to kiss him. Needs to.

Because Billy still smells like his. Under the heat of his rut on the horizon, under his usual scent, he smells like *Steve’s* . And he said that he *wants him* , in no uncertain terms, and Steve feels that tight, hopeless flutter of *longing* in his chest that makes him shaky and breathless and dizzy. Because he’s got *belonging* beating beneath his ribs.

When he pulls back, Billy’s lips are a little red and his pupils are wide, and Steve can’t help but beam up at him.

“Okay. Good. Because I want you, too, and--” Steve wets his lips. “And I wanna give you everything you need.”

I want to take care of you, he doesn’t say. *I think I want to give you everything.*

“That’s a mighty big category of stuff, pretty boy,” Billy says.

His eyes are a little glassy from the kiss, and his voice is a little rough. Steve watches him swallow, watches the way his throat works.

Billy opens his mouth, like he’s going to say something, then closes it. When Steve raises his eyebrows a little, he tries again.

“Look,” Billy says, “is there anything you *wouldn’t* wanna do? Like uh.” Billy coughs, cheeks flushing a little with red. “Like, god -- I want to fuck you *so badly* .”

Steve’s mouth goes dry, dry, *dry* . He feels something pull in his chest, and then something molten burns low in his gut, and he shifts a little, trying to will himself not to get hard.

“That-- I would be--” Steve clears his throat, his voice a little tight with the desire threatening to choke him. “Yeah, no, that would be--

I would be *fine* with that. I, uh… I kinda figured that would be on the menu, so."

He gestures, half-hearted and face burning, to his nightstand. His chest feels hot and too tight, and he wonders just how a mid-morning nap turned into *this* .

"I mean, you're going into rut. I figured it would be-- It's instinct to want to--" Steve can't bring himself to say the word *breed* or *mate* , and he clears his throat again.

Billy's eyes go wide, and then he's looking at Steve like he's some kind of treasure. Billy leans in and kisses him, deep and affectionate, like he's trying to convey gratitude because he doesn't quite know how to speak it.

"You're perfect," Billy says against Steve's lips. "Are you sure? Are you sure you want that? It's not really…" *something alphas do* , Steve's mind fills in for him.

Steve huffs against his mouth, kisses him for a long second, and then pulls back, and his face is hot but the words come easy and heated. "Billy Hargrove, believe me when I say *I want you* . I want you to fuck me. Hell, I want to fuck *you* . But it's your rut, and we'll be doing what *you* need. I want you to fuck me. I want you to *knot me* ."

The most ridiculous sound escapes from Billy's throat. When Steve looks at his eyes, they're dark, pupils blown so wide that Steve can barely make out the blue.

Billy doesn't even answer him, he just rolls and pushes Steve down against the bed, catching him in a kiss that's far more heated than before. He licks into Steve's mouth, hot and heavy, and there's a growl low in Billy's throat that just won't quit.

Steve moans, arching up beneath him. His fingers fist in his hair, his other hand sliding around to press between his shoulder blades and urge him closer. There's something terribly, blissfully wonderful about being pressed down onto his bed by the weight of Billy's body, and the thrumming rumble of noise that vibrates up through Billy's

chest rattles into Steve's bones and makes him shiver.

"Jesus," Billy says, pulling back just so that he can nip at Steve's jaw, to get his tongue on that skin. "I can't believe you. You're so fucking perfect."

Billy laughs a little, and presses his face against Steve's neck.

"How are we supposed to nap *now* ?" he asks, rocking his body against Steve's.

Steve bites back a needy sound, hips jerking a little, and his nails dig in blunt at Billy's back. His head feels heavy and dizzy with the praise, from the kiss that stole his breath, and he squeezes his eyes shut and tries to think beyond the lust addling him.

"We should," Steve mutters. "Don't wanna exhaust ourselves."

"What if," Billy asks, and presses a kiss to Steve's ear. He takes the cartilage in his teeth and hums. "What if we exhausted ourselves *for* our nap?"

"That's--" Steve groans, shuddering and shying from Billy's teeth. "I really don't have a good argument against that idea."

Billy grins.

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Something drags Billy out of a sound sleep.

He wakes with a start, surrounded by Steve's smell. Groggy and feverish, he buries himself in it, nuzzling closer to Steve's neck, working his body as close as it can get to Steve's warmth.

The doorbell rings. Again.

Fuck, that's what woke him the first time.

Billy groans when, for a third time, the bell rings. Loud. Annoying. Unnecessary.

“ *Steve* ,” Billy whines. “Make it stop.”

Steve grunts next to him. He doesn’t move until the bell rings for a fourth time.

Tossing the blankets aside, Steve huffs out a curse under his breath-- *for fuck’s sake* -- and pulls from Billy’s arms. When Billy cracks an eye open, Steve is still naked and bare and lovely, and as he turns to grab his long discarded sweats, Billy can make out the livid bite he’d left on Steve’s hip earlier.

“On second thought,” Billy says, skin feeling heated from memories of earlier bubbling to the surface. “Forget whoever it is. Stay.”

All Billy wants is to press Steve down against the bed again, to push him down against the sheets and take him deep into his throat like earlier. His throat is still a little raw with it, from Billy’s feverish enthusiasm. He remembers how Steve had squirmed and swiveled, until he was twisted all the way around. Until he was working Billy’s dick into his own mouth. Billy had nearly come right then and there, so blown away, so set aflame by Steve's eagerness, his zeal.

He wants to do *that* again. And he wants to do so much more.

Steve meets his eyes with a lazy, sleepy smile as he pulls his sweats up over his hips. “Trust me, if it’s who I think it is, they won’t go away until I answer.” He says, pulling that same dumb sweater from the night before over his head. “Or they’ll try and break in. That’s happened once.”

Billy groans and clambers out of bed. He snags his --Harrington’s-- sweats and a tee out of the first drawer he grabs for. It's a white undershirt, way too tight, but it works. And then he follows Steve out the door in a rush, unwilling to let Steve answer the door yet, even though whomever is mashing the button.

At this point, Billy's damn sure he knows who it is.

“Wait,” Billy says, snagging Steve by the wrist before he can make it to the door.

He hesitates for a moment -- then leans forward and just plants

himself at Steve's neck, huffing out a breath of air before he rubs his face against Steve's neck like a cat.

Billy pulls back, flushed, a little embarrassed that he felt the need, that he *had,* to do that. He lets go, and gestures at the door with an avoidant look. “You gonna get that?”

Steve stands there and stares at him for a moment. But then he’s grinning, leaning in and pecking Billy on the corner of the mouth, and pulling away.

He swings the door open right as they go to ring the bell *again* , and standing outside on Steve’s patio are five eager, young faces. *Exactly* who Billy expected.

“Why are you trying to break my doorbell?” Steve asks.

“Steve!” Dustin beams, all teeth. “You’re alive!”

Steve leans against the door jamb with a shoulder, arms crossing over his chest, and Billy can only imagine the dry look on his face. “Why would I not be?”

“Billy Hargrove’s car is in your driveway,” Lucas pipes up, and then his eyes skirt past Steve and into the foyer, landing on where Billy is hovering. “And he’s standing right behind you.”

“Yes,” Steve says.

“Is he holding you hostage?” Dustin asks.

Steve snorts out a little laugh, and he glances over his shoulder at Billy. “Are you holding me hostage?”

“Probably,” Billy says.

He feels warm and flushed and he steadied himself against a wall. Just a casual lean, like he normally does. He tries glaring, but it doesn't seem to deter the kids or get them to leave at all.

“Okay, he's alive,” Billy says, a hint of a growl in the back of his throat. “Theory disproved. You can go now.”

“Hey, Billy,” Max says, from behind the Byers kid. Billy doesn't like the way she's smiling.

Steve bites his lips into his mouth the way he does when he’s trying not to smile, too. He turns his focus back on the kids hovering outside, like they might try and bolt past him at any moment-- or pull him outside and away from Billy.

“Why are you guys here in the first place?” Steve asks.

Dustin rocks up onto his toes. “Well, Nancy told Mike, who told Lucas, who told me, who told everyone that you were home alone this weekend, and we decided to swing by and make sure you weren’t, like, becoming a hermit. Or dying of loneliness, like you get sometimes.”

Steve’s shoulders bunch up and then relax again. He seems to let out a little sigh, and he reaches out and places a hand on top of Dustin’s head.

“Thanks, shithead.” Steve says, and his voice is soft with fondness. “But I’m fine. Promise. Not dying of loneliness.”

“Well, obviously, Billy Hargrove’s in your house.” Dustin says.

“Yeah, you’re probably dying of something else.” Lucas adds.

Billy grimaces, knowing the damage he did to Steve in the past. He knows how dangerous it was, how dangerous *he* was. It still makes his stomach twist in sick memory.

Steve scrubs a hand over his face. “Do I look bruised to you?”

They all share a look.

“Well,” Mike says, but Will is staring at Steve, eyes flitting between him and Billy, something strange about the frown on his mouth. “No.”

“But maybe he just hasn’t tried, yet.” Lucas argues.

Steve looks somewhere between amused and annoyed when he looks

back at Billy again. “Are you intending to beat me up, kill me, or otherwise maim me in any way?”

Billy raises his eyebrows and thinks, blissfully, of sinking his teeth into the flesh by Steve's hip again. Or maybe his inner thigh. Or maybe, just maybe, Billy could get at his neck.

Billy makes a strangled sound in his throat and tries to swallow another growl. Yeah, god, he definitely wants to maim Steve Harrington a little.

“Course not,” he says, voice tight -- and boy howdy, does that sound like a lie. “Don't you twerps have any place better to be?”

Billy's trying to remember where he put his wallet, wondering if they'd leave if he gave them ten bucks for the arcade.

“Not really,” Dustin says, at the same time that Mike huffs out a tired, “ *Yes* .”

“But we can’t leave, yet.” Max blurts, elbowing Mike, who looks even *more* like he wants to be anywhere else.

With a sigh, Mike unslings his backpack from his shoulder and starts digging around. Steve stands there, patient as can be, when Billy would’ve already slammed the door shut in their faces.

“When Dustin said he told everyone else, he *meant* everyone else.” Mike says, and holds up a giant radio.

Steve takes it with a little hesitation, pulls out the antena, and thumbs the receiver. “El?” he asks, and that’s an unfamiliar name.

For a moment, there’s nothing, then a hush of static. Then, a little girl’s voice.

“Hi, Steve.”

“Hey, small fry.” Steve replies. “I heard Dustin got everyone a little worked up over me for *no reason* .”

Dustin grins, a little abashed.

“You’re safe?”

“I’m safe,” Steve says. “My friend is over. Remember I told you about him?”

Lucas’ nose wrinkles up, and he mouths the word *friend* at Max, who glances at Billy and shrugs a shoulder in reply.

“The one like Max. The one you’re not sure about.”

Steve glances over at Billy, then away again just as quick. “That one. He’s here with me, I’m not alone, everything’s fine.”

There’s a long pause. The kids shift on their feet, like they’re nervous about something.

Then:

“You’re sure about him now.”

It isn’t a question. Steve’s ears go red.

“Yeah, short stack.” Steve says. “So, I’m gonna hand you back to Mike and everyone’s gonna get off my porch. Okay?”

“Okay. Bye, Steve.”

“Bye, El.” Steve says, pushing the antena back in and holding out the radio for Mike. “We good?”

Reluctantly, they start to nod.

Billy can't help but shift on his feet. He's trying to ignore how warm he feels. How dizzy. How weirdly territorial. He makes a fist, clenching and unclenching his hand at his side.

“Great. Good. Now go,” Billy finally snarls, a little too viciously, which probably doesn't *help* Steve's case for being safe.

Dustin frowns. Max rolls her eyes.

“Listen, here, you *knothead* .” Dustin jabs a finger forward, eyes narrowed, and Steve just groans and tips his head back against the

open door. “Steve was our friend *first* --”

“Here he goes,” Lucas huffs.

“--so you can cut the alpha bullshit while we check on *our friend* --”

Steve’s head lulls over, and he meets Billy’s eyes. “You had to get him started, didn’t you?”

“--because the last time we saw you two in the same room, you kicked his ass!”

Steve hangs his head with a little wince. “Thanks, Dustin.”

“What?” he crosses his arms, puffing himself up, like he might try and fight Billy himself if he makes the wrong move. “It’s true. We’re just watching your back.”

Billy's just glad these kids are a little too young to be throwing out hormones -- or Billy would really have to restrain himself. Still, he has to grit his teeth and shove his hands into the deep pockets of the sweatpants to keep himself contained.

He takes one breath, then another -- and he still feels dizzy, burning up, like he wants to crawl out of his skin. And it's only getting worse.

“Yeah, I know I'm a dick,” Billy says, through gritted teeth, hoping to say something to make the kids *go away* . “Are you done?”

“Well, at least he'll admit it,” Lucas mutters, and Max elbows him.

“You should probably drink some water, Billy,” Max says, and her eyes are narrowed.

And he knows, he *knows* he's starting to sweat and look a little overheated.

“Yeah, I'll take that under consideration, *thanks.”*

Steve shifts, where he’s standing at the door, and his eyes are suddenly on Billy-- on his shoulders and where his hands are hiding in his sweats and on his face. His lips press thin and his shoulders

draw tight, and then he turns back to the kids.

“Alright,” Steve ushers them away from the door. “That’s enough, I think. We can do this some other time.”

“But Steve--”

“Dustin,” Steve claps a hand onto his shoulder, squeezing at it. “I promise. I’m *fine* . Thank you for checking on me. I’ll see you on Monday, okay?”

Dustin’s lips purse up. But Will reaches out and tugs at the hood of his sweatshirt.

“C’mon, Dustin.” Will says, and he smiles over at Steve and then beyond him at Billy. “He’ll call us if he needs us. Right, Steve?”

“You gonna be at Mike’s?” Steve asks.

They nod.

“I’ll call you if I need you,” Steve says. “See you guys later.”

There’s a chorus of *bye, Steves* , and Max calls a goodbye to Billy. Will even waves at him.

Then Steve shuts the door.

The second the latch clicks into place, Billy is on Steve. Surging forward and pressing him against the nearest wall. He doesn't so much kiss Steve, as desperately mouth at him, all over. Kissing requires finesse that he doesn't currently have. Billy gets at Steve's lips, his jaw, his neck, until Billy is left growling and whining into the crook of Steve's throat, panting and finally appeased that Steve smells like him enough. Not that he ever didn't.

“ *Steve* ,” he whines, pressing flush against him, trapping Steve between him and the wall.

“Hey,” Steve breathes, carding his fingers through the mess of his hair, gasping as Billy presses in *harder* , and he presses a kiss to the top of Billy’s head. “Hey, hey, I got you. M’sorry. I didn’t know they

would come over. Didn’t know you were this close already.”

“I didn't -- didn't know,” Billy says.

Suddenly, Steve feels Billy's tongue hot at his throat, drawing over his jugular, wet and warm.

“It's been a long time,” Billy says with a groan, body rolling against Steve’s. “Since I've spent it with anyone. Didn't think it would feel like this.”

It makes sense. That the rut would be more pronounced with someone around. Someone ready to help and share the moment with.

“Didn't like someone in your house,” Billy says, and Steve remembers how fiercely territorial he had felt, how protective he had been of his possessions and his space.

“It's okay. We can talk about it later.” Steve says, though his voice is a wobbly mess now, losing himself in Billy's scent. “We should get you some food and some water, and then go back to bed.”

Billy swallows. “I'm really -- not all that hungry. Or thirsty.”

It feels like he's trying to drown himself in Steve's scent. Like if he presses in close enough it'll help relieve the heat in his gut.

“What about -- just bed?” Billy asks.

Steve shudders. Hesitates like he knows he should insist. Should get Billy to hydrate and eat something. But he's honestly five seconds away from wrapping his legs around Billy's waist and letting him rut against him right here in his foyer.

“Okay,” Steve says. “Let's go to bed.”

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They don't quite make it to the bed, but they do make it out of the foyer and up the stairs.

It's not that Billy can't think, can't control himself. He can. He could.

But there's something heady and hot about not having to, about just being able to surrender himself to pure instinct.

So, about halfway to Steve's bedroom, Billy drags Steve to the plush, carpeted ground, and presses him down.

“Perfect,” Billy says. “You still smell so perfect.”

And then he devours Steve in a kiss.

Steve moans into his mouth, hands fluttering to Billy's shoulder and his lower back, pulling him tighter, closer, until there's nothing but clothes separating them.

Billy feels like a damn furnace. Hot and perfect and totally overwhelming against him.

And he smells *so good* . Smells exactly how Steve thought he would, the usual spicy notes more pronounced, contrasting with the deep musk of him. Steve wants to breathe in at his throat for days -- or let Billy scent him from head to toe so he can never get rid of him.

He's panting and a little dazed by the time the kiss breaks, and he stares up at Billy's dark eyes with a hazy look. “This is not my bed,” Steve mumbles.

“Close enough,” Billy says, and rocks his hips down to meet Steve’s.

Billy’s hard already, achingly so, and it feels good, *so good* to just roll his hips against Steve's, to feel the drag of their cocks together with just thin sweatpants separating them.

Breath catching, Steve spreads his legs a little, invites Billy *closer* into the vee of his thighs. He hooks an ankle behind Billy's knee for leverage and ruts up in reply.

It feels so ridiculously depraved. Rutting against each other, still fully clothed. Like their patience is too thin for anything else. And judging by the hard length he feels pressing against his own, Steve's not far off the mark with that thought.

Billy knows they could move to the bed. He knows he could get his

hand down Steve's pants and jack him off right here. Hell, he could get a hand down his *own* pants and jack himself *onto* Steve right here.

But there's something so base, so primal about letting his hips roll against Steve's while he presses him into the ground. Like he's consumed by it, like Steve's got him so far gone that anything else other than pure instinct is out the window completely.

"You're mine," Billy says, and his words are a half moan, half whisper.

Steve jerks slightly, hips lurching up beneath him, and he shudders back down, clutching at Billy's shoulder. He's nodding his head before he can help it, throat working, face flush.

"Yours," he says on a breath he doesn't have, muscles in his abdomen winding tight as he rolls up against him, friction a delight across his nerves. "I'm yours."

Rationally, Billy knows it's only for this moment, this weekend perhaps. But it's still a rush hearing Steve say he's *his* . Like Billy's his mate.

Billy groans with it and rolls his hips, seeking *more, more, more.* Every sound, every breath Steve makes Billy eats right up. He loses himself in it, in the pleasure of just rutting down and seeking friction like an animal.

Pleasure catches him before embarrassment can. " *Steve* ," he breathes out, mouthing at Steve's neck. "I'm gonna --"

Steve ruts up in harder, longer thrusts. He pants, open mouthed and lost up at the ceiling, thighs coming up and squeezing at Billy's hips.

"C'mon. C'mon, Billy, come for me." Steve says, and then he bares his throat up to him, head lulling over. "Mark me. Make me yours."

Billy hesitates for a fraction of a second -- and then his teeth are on Steve, biting down against flushed skin. He can feel Steve's pulse under his tongue, can taste the way their scents are mingling. In that moment, it's everything. Overpowering and heady and *so much* .

He doesn't register the orgasm as it creeps up on him, just the wash of pleasure hitting all his nerves at once as he gets Steve under his teeth and his tongue. Billy can hear himself groaning, panting, whining against Steve's neck as his hips shudder against Steve's.

Steve locks up for a moment, for a fraction, his body instinctually stringing tight for a fight. But as Billy stutters down against him, as his teeth lock into place, something in Steve gives.

He goes completely lax. Pliant and easy and whimpering, a heady rush of sensation flooding through him until he's completely consumed by it.

Belonging.

His head swims as Billy slows above him, as he stills, teeth still at Steve's neck. He feels drugged, drunk, and he paws at Billy's shoulder with a clumsy hand, making a soft noise and pulling Billy closer as he comes back down.

He's still hard in his pants, sweaty and flush, but it's secondary. Secondary to Billy lapping at his pulse and claiming him with his mouth.

It takes Billy a second to come back from it, to let the fevered fogginess drain from his awareness. And then he's pushing a hand down between them to palm at Steve's still-hard length over the sweats.

"Do you want--?" Billy asks, and his voice sounds a little like he's drunk, which, for all intents and purposes, he kind of *is* . "God, I wanna eat you out. I wanna get my mouth on you. Wanna feel you break apart under my tongue."

Steve whines, arching up under his touch, his hips bucking. He wants it -- wants *everything* .

" *Yes* ," he breathes, squirming a little, nails digging in. "Yes, please, yes."

With that, Billy scoops Steve up like he weighs nothing, like it's no trouble at all, and carries him into the bedroom. Billy doesn't drop or

toss Steve onto the bed, but sets him down and covers him with his own body once more, like he can't bear to be away from him.

Billy kisses him hard, licking into Steve's mouth like he's claiming him, and then drops his mouth to Steve's neck again, to tongue over that bite mark. Then, he works his way down Steve's body, only pushing to slide Steve's clothes off as he gets to them, until Steve is naked underneath him.

Shivering and hard and completely bare, Steve stares up at him with dark eyes. He feels like he's on display, like this is only for Billy's eyes. Like *Steve* is only for Billy's eyes.

He pulls Billy close, kisses the corner of his mouth, his cheek, his brow. He tugs at the shirt plastered to Billy's chest, pulling it up to get at the skin of Billy's abdomen, and he shoves at his waistband, wanting skin on skin. Needing the intimacy.

"God, Billy." Steve says against his mouth as he kisses him again, as he slides his hands down Billy's bare chest after he's stripped his shirt over his head. "You're on fire."

He doesn't *feel* like he's on fire. He just feels *good* .

Billy shrugs off his pants and moves so that his body is completely covering Steve, so as much skin is touching skin as possible. He can't stop touching Steve, can't keep his hands off his sides, his arms, everywhere his hands can touch.

"Wanna take you apart," Billy says, mouthing at a spot by Steve's collarbone until it's red. Until it's *his* . "Wanna make you mine."

"Do it," Steve says, hands easing up Billy's arms, then down his sides, then around to his back, shivering beneath him, head falling back against the pillows. "I want it. Wanna be yours. Do it."

There's no real way to make Steve his. Not like if Steve were an omega. But Billy could keep biting Steve's neck until it scars, until Steve is marred by him for forever. It's a dizzying thought, forbidden and heavy and hot. And it's enough to have Billy manhandling Steve, grabbing him and flipping him until he's face down on the mattress.

It has Billy kissing, mouthing, biting down his spine until he gets to Steve's ass.

He'd tell Steve how perfect he is, how beautiful, if he was thinking at all clearly.

Instead, Billy just gets his palms, hot and rough, on Steve's ass cheeks and pulls them apart. He only admires for a second before dipping in with his tongue, licking wet and wide over Steve's hole with a groan.

Steve jolts forward, gasping out a little sound, and his hands fist into his sheets as his eyes go wide. “Jesus, Billy.”

He can’t help his blush. Can’t help the swimming sensation in his belly, a bit embarrassed, and squirms beneath his hands, beneath the heat of Billy’s breath against his ass. He also can’t help the way his cock jumps, or the way he twitches, muscles tense in anticipation.

There's a certain power to pushing Steve down against the sheets, of getting him loose and willing underneath Billy's tongue.

It's also hot as hell, licking Steve until he's slick with Billy's spit, until he’s groaning for more. When Steve truly starts to beg for it, Billy pushes his tongue inside. Steve is scalding and tight around him -- but it's not just that, it's the way he squirms and shivers and shakes under Billy's hands.

Billy grabs a hold of his hips, fingers digging in, and works him over.

God, Steve always thought Billy had a wicked tongue, but he'd never thought of this. Never thought he'd use it to make Steve shake like this.

It's depraved and lewd and obscene, the way Billy tugs his hips up and works the tight muscles loose. The way he groans against Steve and works him over, teasing until Steve is panting pleas under his breath, and then pressing *in* , hot and perfect and wet.

Steve presses his forehead to the sheets, panting and clutching at the bedding, twisting the linens up in his fists as he rocks back. As he tries to get *more* , an ache in him he'd never felt before, consuming and endless. As he grits his teeth around a whine, spine curving

down, and he practically *presents* himself to Billy.

His cock is weeping between his legs, throbbing, and he reaches for it blindly. “ *God, Billy, don't stop* .”

Feeling Steve like his, more so than even seeing him, tears through Billy, unearthing something overwhelmingly instinctual. Something base and depraved and filthy.

Billy fucks him with his tongue and imagines pushing in with his cock -- and he's already hard again, thick and full, against his own thigh. But he focuses on Steve right now, licking and driving deeper and deeper until Steve is trembling, panting, gasping.

Steve barely has to touch himself. Barely gets his fingers around himself before he's muffling a cry into the mattress and spilling out over his own fingers. His muscles wind tight as it sears through him, as he chokes on his own breath, as pressure pools at the base of his cock and his knot swells against his palm.

He shakes through it, until he can finally suck in enough air to gasp. “ *Billy.”*

Billy can smell it on the air the second before Steve comes. He's barely even done spilling himself onto the sheets by the time Billy’s got him flipped onto his back and is lapping up his come, greedy for the taste of Steve. He gets his lips on Steve's cock and mouths over his knot, licking over the thickness of it, the heat.

Steve writhes. Squirming and panting and mindless. He claws at Billy’s shoulders and tries to wiggle away-- too hot, too *sensitive* .

He hiccups out a little sound, and then Billy’s name again, and then a breathy *please, too much, please* , nerves firing off in every direction.

Eventually, Billy relents. He moves his mouth to Steve's hip, to bite there until there's another red, angry mark. Until Steve’s breathing slows a little.

“Fuck,” Billy says, mouthing against Steve's skin. He looks up at him, taking in how wrecked Steve looks, how fucked out. “You're beautiful like this.”

There's nothing Billy wants more than to take him apart even more.

Steve focuses on his breath. On the slow in and out. On Billy petting over his hip, eyes for Steve and Steve alone.

He's still shaking a little, still hard, his knot filled and hot at the base -- but Billy's hard, too.

Coming back to himself, cheeks flush and hair a mess, Steve smoothes his hands over Billy's shoulders apologetically. He'd left pink lines there in his desperate haze.

“Sorry,” he mutters, when his heart isn't pounding in his ears anymore.

“Nothing to be sorry for,” Billy says. He’s not even sure what Steve *is* sorry for, but he knows that Steve needs a break, needed Billy to ease off for a bit -- so he did. “I promise.”

He thanks god, or whoever the fuck up there, that he’s not out of his head like an omega in heat. Yeah, rut makes him a little crazy, territorial, and worked up as hell -- but he can still stop himself, if need be. Coming first really helps, though -- getting off in the hallway had really let off some of his steam.

Billy sits himself up a little, just so he can look at Steve, at his strung-out body, at his panting chest and his fucking *knot* .

“God, you’re a sight,” Billy says, running careful fingers over Steve’s abdomen, unable to keep completely away. He brings his other hand to his own dick, to slowly work himself over while gently admiring Steve with his fingertips.

Steve’s skin jumps under Billy’s touch, but he hums and watching Billy with a keen gaze. Taking in the way his hand works over his own cock as he touches Steve with a delicate, reverent care.

“You’re not so bad yourself,” Steve says, meeting his eyes again with a crooked, dreamy little grin.

“Yeah?” Billy asks, feeling a little breathless already. “God, I wanna fuck you so badly. Wanna be inside of you.”

Billy pants, splaying his hand over Steve's belly, catching every breath, every hitch.

Steve bites the inside of his cheek and shudders. His fingers flex out against the sheets, but he feels that ache in him -- that unnameable one -- and he twists up and fumbles over onto his side.

Jerking his bedside drawer open, he dips his hand in and comes up victorious. He passes the lube to Billy, sitting up, his ears and neck hot, as he presses a kiss to Billy's cheek. To his temple. To his ear.

"Let's get you off again first," Steve says, hands smoothing down the flex of Billy's abdomen, breath hot at Billy's ear. "And then you can tell me how you want me."

"Jesus, you're something," Billy says, and then climbs on top of Steve, straddling his hips so that his dick is practically on top of Steve's.

Billy jerks himself slowly, just staring down at Steve's body, eyes on not just his dick, but all of him. He wants to get his mouth on Steve's knot again, but it's going down slowly -- and Billy knows he'll get another chance. They're far from done, and that seems to be a regular occurrence for Steve, which is just -- too fucking hot, really.

Wetting his lips, Steve watches as Billy works himself over. As he slides his fist around his cock, and he's not sure if he's supposed to help, to offer him something, or to let him enjoy this. Steve would be lying if he said it wasn't ridiculously hot to watch, anyway.

Still, he smooths his hands up Billy's thighs, shifting a little restlessly beneath him. "Do you want me to do anything, or…?"

Billy swallows, already feeling close. It always comes easily, when he wants it to, with his rut. Like his body can just keep *going and going and going* . It makes sense, anyway -- if he were with an omega now, he'd be pulling out all the stops.

"You're good," Billy says. And he means it. "God, you're *so good* ."

His breath hitches as he slides his hand over his length, as he watches Steve breathe underneath him. "I wanna -- I wanna open you up,

until you're loose and ready for me. Until you're so wet, until you're begging for it."

Billy gasps, his thighs shaking a little.

"I wanna slide right into you, fill you up. So fucking full," Billy groans, fist moving a little faster. He's close. So close. "Wanna -- wanna fucking knot you, Steve. Wanna -- fill you up with my come."

Billy's voice breaks as his orgasm hits. He spills out over his fist, onto Steve's taut stomach and his softening cock. Billy shakes with it, shuddering, as he strokes himself through it, until he's panting and cursing and looking down at Steve like he's a goddamn miracle.

For a moment, all Steve can do is stare, breathless and heart racing, at the gorgeous man above him. His head swims with the realization that Billy got off just looking at him. That Billy wants him *that much* .

Then, propping himself up onto his elbows, he catches Billy by the back of the neck and coaxes him down into a long kiss. He knows he's a mess, of his and Billy's come, of sweat, but he wants to press in from hip to shoulder, until he can feel Billy's heart against his.

"That was--" Steve gasps, between one press of their lips and the next. " --*stupidly* hot to watch. You're so -- fuck, Billy, you're so gorgeous."

Billy moans into the kiss, still a little out of breath, a little out of it. Hell, he'll be out of it for at least a day.

" *You're* stupidly hot to watch," Billy mumbles against Steve's lips.

Impulsively, Billy snakes a hand down between them and drags it through his still-warm come, pressing it against Steve's skin, making it even more of a mess than it was. Making *Steve* even more a mess. But there's something primal about it, about smearing his release against Steve's skin, about coating him in something so intrinsically *Billy* .

Steve shudders and his nose wrinkles up. But when he pulls back, he catches the scent -- sex, spice, and Steve's own unique hint of warmth.

He breathes deep and hums on the exhale, mouthing over Billy's jaw. “Yours enough, yet?”

It’s stupid, Billy knows, putting so much stock into this. But right now, in this moment, Steve says he’s his and Billy *believes him* . He knows, come Monday, that they’ll both have a clear head, and Steve wouldn’t have meant it *like that* , like how Billy means it -- and that’s fine. *Right now* Steve is all his, and Billy fucking loves it.

“Not quite,” Billy says, tilting his head a little so that Steve can get to his neck just a bit. “You could be dripping with me.”

Carefully, Steve places a scatter of kisses along Billy's throat, and he feels desire yank at something low in his stomach, his dick already coming back around for another round at the words. “What are you waiting for, then?”

Billy swallows, his gaze going dark and a little surprised. “You sure you’re ready?”

Hesitantly, Billy gets a fist around the lube anyway, fingers going around the bottle, feeling more nervous than he’d like to admit.

“Yeah,” Steve says, smiling as he pulls back, fingers gentle across Billy's cheek. “I'm sure. Unless you wanna wait? Drink something? Eat something?”

“Not really,” Billy said, feeling not at all inclined to get up from Steve’s bed. “Just want you.”

All he’s concerned about is Steve, and his ability to enjoy whatever they get up to to the highest extent.

“You wanna be like this, on your back?” Billy asks, pressing a kiss to Steve’s neck.

He bites a little, teeth pulling playfully at pale skin. A growl slips out of his throat as he slots himself between Steve’s thighs.

Something pure and raw makes Steve tip his head over when Billy's growl rolls up through his chest. A primal instinct to just give everything over. To show his throat and his belly.

“Like this,” he breathes, and then blushes, feeling the lick of desire in his belly. “For now.”

“For now, huh?” Billy asks, popping open the bottle of lube to spread some over a couple of his fingers. “Tell me how else you want it.”

Billy dips his fingers down between the two of them and slides his fingers, wet and slick, over Steve’s already loosened hole. Slowly, he begins to press one finger inside, feeling the way Steve’s body yields to him.

Breath stalling in his chest, Steve shifts a little, tries not to jerk the same way he had when Billy thoroughly fucked him with his tongue. He breathes in measures, and his hands come up to curl and uncurl into the pillow above his head. He spreads his legs a little, and brings up his knees.

It doesn't hurt -- not in the least, he's too relaxed for that -- but it is a sensation he's unfamiliar with. He trusts Billy to stop if he tells him, though. To slow down if he needs it.

Currently, he doesn't need it.

“I, uh…” Steve blinks a few times, huffing out a soft sound as he feels Billy stretch and work at the tight muscle, finger slick and thick, and he wonders if this wetness between his cheeks is what omegas have to contend with. “I wanna ride you. And -- and I wanna be on my hands and knees for you.”

“Fuck,” Billy groans, finger bottoming out inside Steve. He is hot and tight around Billy, which is desperately enticing in and of itself. He works his finger a bit, until he pulls it out and starts the careful press of two fingers inside.

“You’re something else,” Billy says, admiring the way Steve shifts underneath his attention.

“You keep --” Steve's words fail him for a moment, straining and arching a bit, fingers digging into the linen, as Billy stretches him out wider. “You keep sayin’ that.”

Billy hums and waits a moment, just waiting for Steve’s body to get

used to the intrusion. He waits until Steve stops straining, until his fingers loosen a little in the sheets.

“Yeah? Maybe because you’re a fucking wonder. Have you ever *seen* yourself?”

Billy is *so goddamn lucky* .

After a beat, he slides his fingers out, adds more lube until they’re dripping with it, and works them back in. Easier. Slicker.

“God, you’re so wet,” Billy murmurs.

“ *Billy* ,” Steve says, eyes a little wide, voice a little high and full of wavering reproach, face *on fire* -- but his body betrays him, spasming tight, *tight* around Billy's fingers, his cock twitching, as his chest fills with warmth and something coils in his belly at the words.

“So wet for me, huh?” Billy repeats, working his fingers in until Steve is stretched around them, until he bottoms out.

There’s something a little sinful about thinking that Steve is getting wet *for Billy* , like his body is capable of that.

“Think you can take three?” Billy asks, crooking his fingers up, stretching Steve out. He thinks, briefly, that he’ll have to work at least four in -- get him real loose and ready -- if there’s any chance of Steve taking his knot.

Steve is panting, thighs trembling a little, as heat oozes through his veins. It's slow and thick and syrupy, like molasses, spreading up from his core and burning up his entire body from the inside out. His head goes hazy with it. Heavy. And he groans as Billy presses in deeper, rocking with the motion of it, so slick and so hot and so *wet* .

Fuck, that's something he won't ever be able to get out of his head. He wishes, for the first time, that he *was* an omega. That he *could* get wet for Billy.

A whine catches in the back of his throat, and his toes curl as Billy presses his fingers against him in all of the best, most terrible ways.

“Yes,” he gasps, nodding his head, because as much as the stretch of it is strange and a little uncomfortable at first, he realizes that ache, that empty pang inside of him, is a need to be *filled* . “Yes, I can -- I can take three.”

Billy takes him at his word. He slowly slides two fingers out and starts working three, newly refreshed with even more lube, into Steve. It’s slower going than two, and Billy is careful to wait for Steve’s body to relax, to get used to the invasion.

“God, baby, you’re so tight,” Billy says.

He ignores the weight of his own cock, already thick and hard again between his legs. He knows he’ll probably be up all night aching with it, needy and hungry and hot. But maybe he can tire himself out a little -- maybe Steve taking his knot will *help* .

“You’re gonna need to be so loose,” Billy warns.

It's all pressure. Pressure inside, as Billy stretches him. Pressure in his gut, as arousal heightens and builds. Just pressure, until Steve feels too large for his own skin.

Steve pants, jaw going slack as Billy slides his fingers that much deeper -- so fucking gentle, so steady-- and there's a hint of strain. It doesn't last long, Billy waiting and easing over the tight muscles until Steve shudders and relaxes again.

“God -- God, *Billy* --” Steve's words hitch over his tongue, and his face and neck and chest hot at the slick slide of it. “You feel so -- God, it's so good. God, I'm so -- so *wet* .”

“You almost feel ready for me,” Billy says, and he’s nearly panting with it.

Three fingers patiently becomes four. Billy is patient and kind and takes his time with it, taking long moments to pause and refresh the lube as needed. It’s so goddamn difficult, with the weight of his arousal, with the screaming *need* in his head -- but he *wants* this so badly that he knows it has to be perfect. He can’t risk hurting Steve. Can’t risk anything other than ideal.

It helps, maybe, that he’s rutting ever so slightly against the sheets. Dragging himself against them in an effort to relieve some of his tension.

Eventually, Billy leans forward, four fingers pressed deep inside Steve. He slots his lips against Steve’s neck, breathing in the way Steve smells so overwhelmingly like the both of them. “God. I wanna fuck you. Wanna breed you.”

Steve feels like he might burst. Like he might come apart completely at the seams. Each breath he takes is labored, heavy with moans and keening little whines.

He's rocking, shamelessly down against Billy's hand, onto his fingers. There's so much slick that the sheets are wet with it, and he can feel it sliding down every time Billy thrusts in. And when Billy's fingers curl, ever so slightly, Steve writhes and chokes on pleasure.

“Please,” Steve gasps, swallows, and ruts down against his hand, needing *more.* “Please, yes. Please, Billy, I need you.”

There's something depraved in knowing that Steve's body shouldn't be working like this, that alphas bodies aren't meant to be taking a cock, but Steve *wants* it. Desperately, from the way his cock is leaking. From the sounds he's making.

“Shh,” Billy says, slowly working his fingers back out so that he can fill Steve up with something even better. “I've got you,” Billy promises, letting his fingers slide free, leaving Steve empty and whining for a moment.

He slicks up his cock with more lube, gives himself a couple strokes, and lines himself up. Slowly, he presses in, but Steve is good and stretched, that it's easy, so easy. And he’s soaking wet, a goddamn mess, so ready for Billy.

It's good. It's *so good* . It's like a goddamn revelation.

Steve moans, brokenly and shuddering, and his eyes roll back as Billy eases in. His breath comes in little hitches, because as ready as he was from Billy's fingers, nothing could prepare him for actually

feeling Billy's cock slide home into him.

He's hot and thick and long-- and it's so stupidly *good* .

Steve hitches his legs up at Billy's hips, squeezes with his thighs, and groans long and low as Billy draws out-- only to slide back in *deeper* .

“Fuck,” Steve gasps, twitching tight around him. “ *Fuck.”*

Billy has never felt anything quite like this before in his life. There’s something absolutely magical about being surrounded by Steve’s warmth, his heat. It’s decadent and slick and all-encompassing. It’s everything that Billy has ever wanted to feel, deep in a rut, and more. He knows, immediately, that he’ll never feel this way with an omega, that he’ll never have it quite as good as this.

“God, baby,” Billy says, when he’s fully sheathed in Steve, pressed all the way inside. “You’re so good. So tight. Perfect for me.”

Billy can’t help the way his hips start rocking, just a bit, seeking more friction, more pleasure. Steve whines beneath him, back arching and head falling back as he fists his hands into the sheets.

Steve pants, open mouthed and unabashed, chest rising and falling in a steady, sharp cadence. The ache that had been so sharp, so keen and raw, eases as Billy moves. The heat of it, the *pleasure* of it, has Steve clenching his teeth and trying to hold on. Trying to grasp at the sensation with both hands.

But it ebbs and flows with the slow rut of Billy’s hips. Rising until he’s completely overwhelmed by it, drowning in it, only to recede back and leaving gasping, floundering and moaning at the loss. Wanting it again, itching for the moment when Billy fills him completely, and then going tight as he withdraws, like his own body is trying to keep Billy right where he is, buried deep.

“God,” Steve breathes, skin glistening with sweat and flush as Billy rocks in again. “ *Fuck* . I didn’t-- I didn’t think it would feel this good.”

Billy shudders, groaning each time Steve tightens and spasms around him, absolutely ruined by the way that this feels. High and drunk and

completely out of his head. There's nothing except the two of them now, just Billy and Steve and the pleasure aflame between the two of them. It's all-encompassing, coiling tight and white hot in Billy's gut.

To some extent, Billy didn't think it would feel this good, either. How could it? How could something possibly feel *this good* ? He feels consumed by it, broken apart as he fucks into Steve.

Billy gets slick fingers around Steve's dick, stroking him to the same rhythm as his own hips.

It's so good. So *fucking good* -- but it's like he can't get enough. Like, no matter how deep he buries himself in Steve, it's just not *quite enough* .

The pitch of Steve's breath goes high. He reaches between them and grips Billy's wrist as he strokes over him-- not to stop him, but to hold on. His thighs tremble as they tighten around Billy's hips, and the muscles in his abdomen string tight, then tighter as he sobs out a sound.

"I'm not--" Steve shakes his head, and little haphazard, dark hair a mess against the pillow. "Not gonna last long, Billy."

God, that's fine. That's -- so fine. Billy can barely hold himself together at this point. It's all so much, and Steve is so slick, so wet, so open for him. It's like Steve was *made* for Billy, to take his cock. To be bred.

A shudder goes down Billy's spine, pleasure creeping up on him, tingling and fierce.

Billy watches Steve, eyes dark and hungry, taking in the way Steve looks wrecked. The way he looks ruined. And Billy *did that* . Billy's the one who makes Steve moan and shudder with each thrust of his hips, the one making him pant out with every twist of Billy's wrist.

He's so close. *So goddamn close* he can feel it. And he wants it, too. Wants to drive into Steve's heat and fill him up with Billy's release.

"Yeah?" Billy asks, hips fucking into Steve hard, savoring the wet sounds, the way their scents fill the air between them. "You gonna

come for me?”

Steve feels that pull again. That tug of *heat* in his chest, that spreads out slow with every heavy beat of his heart, until he's suffused with it and barely clinging to the edge.

He tries to say *yes* . Tries to say *yes, Billy, I'm gonna come for you* . Tries to warn him.

But he can't form the words, control already slipping from his fingertips. So he nods, hips bucking, breath stalling completely in his chest as it all becomes *too much* . The slide of Billy's cock filling him over and over and *over* . The feeling of his fingers, slick and steady over his dick. The sounds of their bodies meeting, of Billy huffing and panting and groaning above him. The obscene wetness easing the way. *Everything* .

He doesn't breathe as he comes. His eyes squeeze shut tight, his fingers lock around Billy's wrist and in the sheets, his jaw goes slack as he spills out and goes *tight* . Bliss rendering him voiceless, right up until the aftershocks follow.

Then, he's choking on his own moans, on his own pleasure, as Billy grinds deep and Steve spasms around him, knot swelling in the cage of Billy's fingers.

“Oh, fuck. Oh, *fuck* .” He rasps as Billy *squeezes* at his knot. “Ah, *fuu--ck.”*

There’s no hope for Billy.

The second Steve goes tight, the second he gets his fingers over Steve’s knot -- that’s it. He’s absolutely done for. *Gone* . It hits him hard, harder than anything he’s ever felt before. There’s build up, sure, but the sheer scale of it takes him by surprise, the way it bowls him over and nearly knocks him out.

There’s so much heat, so much pleasure, Billy can hardly think.

Before he can even open his eyes, before he even realizes he *closed them* to begin with, he feels his knot start to swell. The heat in the base of his cock is unmistakable. Billy groans and curses, fingers

shuddering around Steve's knot as he pushes his own length in *deeper* , feeling the unmistakable slide of his cock against the mess of his own release. It's depraved, is what it is, the way he wants to fuck his come as far into Steve as it'll go, to fill Steve up until he's dripping.

" *Steve* ," Billy chokes out, his other hand tightening on Steve's hip. "Fuck. Is this --? I'm gonna -- god, I can feel it," he groans, feeling the way his knot swells against Steve's tightness, his heat. "Wanna fill you up."

"Please," Steve breathes, shudders, toes curling as Billy's knot catches on his rim, as he drives his come in deeper, body rocking with the urgent thrust of Billy's hips-- and it's *filthy* . "Please *please* . Do it. *Do it* ."

Billy needs no more encouragement. He pushes in impossibly further and just lets it happen, lets his knot swell against Steve's muscles. He feels Steve's body slowly yield to him, to Billy's expanding knot.

Involuntarily, Billy finds himself folding his body over Steve, covering him with his warmth as his hips rock, ever so slightly.

"You're so *tight* ," Billy groans, and he feels a little like he hasn't stopped coming, his nerves still tingling with the after effects of his orgasm. He feels drunk on it, feverish with the need to fill Steve up. "Can't believe you're taking me like this. You're so good."

Steve whines with each breath, scrambling to get his hands on Billy, nails biting in at Billy's back. The pressure is *impossible* . Steve can't fathom it, can't understand this space he's in, between pleasure and pain, but his body gives as Billy locks into him with his knot, as he grinds the length of himself into Steve's body. His knees draw up, hips canting up, and his feet curl into a point as Billy's cock presses and drags in all of the best, worst, *fucking impossible* ways.

He feels *filled* . Stuffed full to the point of breaking, and when Billy rocks against him, he can't help but cry out and seize up a little, trembling beneath him.

His own knot pulses, throbs, in Billy's hand -- and he doesn't know how, but as Billy ruts into the tight, wet, heat of him, his own cock

weeps and splatters come over the quaking lines of his abdomen. His own body clenches, flutters around the thick, hot knot inside of him, trying to milk Billy for all he's worth.

“Billy ,” he says, and he feels like he's going to *cry* , all of it so much, *too much* , and his nails drag down Billy's back. *“Billy.”*

Billy has never felt anything like it before. He’s never *knotted* anyone before. He doesn’t think that even knotting an omega would be this good, this tight, this hot. Steve is perfect -- and Billy tells him so, panting and moaning against his skin.

Steve’s body pulls another orgasm out of him and Billy fucking shudders and shakes, hips bucking in tiny, aborted motions. His body, trying to fuck every last drop of come deeper and deeper into Steve.

“Gonna breed you,” Billy groans, feeling feverish and dumb, teeth clumsily biting at Steve’s collarbone. “Gonna fuckin’ -- fill you up.”

“ *Fffuck* ,” Steve's eyes roll back again, and he *feels* the heat of Billy coming into him, of him twitching and pulsing and pumping him full, full, *full* .

He jerks, following Billy rapidly over the edge, and he makes a mess over his own stomach, locking up around Billy as a raw, animalistic sound wells up from the back of his throat. He bucks, thighs clamping down around Billy's waist, and he can't see, can't hear, can't think of anything beyond *Billy* .

Billy drifts, his arms snaking around Steve so that he can feel even closer, even more attached. There’s nothing quite like it, he thinks dimly. Nothing like being stuck to Steve like this.

It lasts longer than it usually does. Maybe it’s got something to do with his rut, or the pressure of Steve squeezing down and around him, but Billy feels like his knot takes *ages* to diminish.

But soon, Billy can feel the pressure ease, can start to feel Steve’s body getting looser around him. He’s left with his own slowly softening cock, enveloped in the mess of his own release. As his knot

fades, he can’t help but shift himself, to feel the potential of his own freedom.

His cock slides so easily through his own come, so easy, so slick. Billy chokes with it, hips rocking so gently. Unhurried. *Tender* . He can’t believe how depraved it feels, sliding his cock like this into Steve, through his own mess -- still warm, still so wet.

“ *Steve,* ” Billy gasps.

And Billy feels it again, creeping up on him like he didn’t even think possible.

Steve moans soft on an exhale. He's still shaking, still trembling, and hot all over -- but Billy's moving, rocking easy and slow *inside* of him, and his head lulls over as his body goes lax. As the tension bleeds out of him in the wake of his orgasms, and a dizzy haze settles into his bones.

He hums and turns his head, pressing his lips to Billy's cheek and smoothing his hands up Billy's back. His cock is soft against his stomach, but when Billy rocks in a little harder, a little more pointedly, it twitches and Steve's breath catches.

He feels like he *just* caught his breath. Like he *just* came down. But Billy is still shifting against him, into him, into the messy, wet, heat of his body.

And he can't help it, the way his voice peaks with surprise. “ *Again?”*

Billy whines, low and nearly-pained. He’s so exhausted, so dazed -- but Steve feels so good, so wet, so loose.

“ *Please* ?” Billy asks, but his hips are already moving, already rutting into Steve. Slow, unhurried -- but steady.

The rush of it is -- Steve can feel Billy getting hard *inside of him* . He spits out a curse, pleasure sparking painfully in his gut, and he nods, hapless and helpless, clutching at Billy's shoulders.

“Yeah. Yeah, okay.” Steve says, throat working, and he grunts as it earns a little buck of Billy's hips. “ *Fuck.”*

“You’re so wet,” Billy pants, hips snapping so that he’s buried deep in Steve, surrounded by his warmth. “So ready for me. Dripping with it,” Billy says.

He gets a hand between the two of them, dragging through Steve’s come to get a hand around his length.

“You’re perfect,” Billy says. “So perfect. So goddamn perfect.”

Like a mantra, a prayer, a promise.

“Don't -- don't --” Steve paws at his arm, jaw winding tight, but he's already half hard again, Billy's hand scorching against his dick.

He's too oversensitive. Too overstimulated. Billy's hand on him is *too much* .

“Just -- just fuck me.” Steve gasps, rocking up to meet him, catching Billy's hand and pulling it from his length, threading the mess of their fingers together. “C'mon. Take what you need.”

And *that's* the hottest thing Billy's ever heard out of Steve's pretty little lips, save for maybe the way he moans out Billy's name between breaths.

So, Billy braces himself with his free hand splayed over Steve's ribs and fucks into him. Steady and slow, losing himself in the feeling, in the sounds of their bodies meeting. He bucks upward, driving in against Steve in a way Billy knows’ll make him shudder

“It's like you were made for me,” Billy says, reverent, as he slips nearly all the way out, only to press himself fully to the hilt.

It's like fireworks in Steve's belly. Sensation exploding under his skin, making him arch, making him writhe as Billy drives in *hard* .

It's not fast. It's not quick or desperate or hurried. But Billy withdraws and then rocks in *deep* and a little on this side of *rough* .

Steve's head snaps back against the bed, and he bucks, squeezing at Billy's hand as he drags over *that spot* inside of Steve that makes him *burn* and feel like crawling out of his own skin. He gasps out a curse,

gasps out Billy's name like he's Steve's god, and his spine bows up as he spasms around him, muscles fluttering.

And Steve doesn't know what possesses him. Doesn't know what madness overcomes him. But he knows he's burning and he wants *more.*

“Harder,” Steve says.

“Yeah?” Billy asks -- and gives him what he asked for.

Steve is so wet that it's easy to drive into him hard and fast and brutal, to pick up the pace like they haven't been doing this for so long already. But Billy is hard and Steve is loose and moaning for more underneath him and Billy can't just ignore something like that.

With each thrust he aims for Steve's prostate, dragging against it, gasping every time Steve tightens around him.

“Fuck,” Billy pants, eyes swimming as he tries to focus on Steve.

Steve, who is a goddamn mess, a fucking disaster -- and so, so beautiful.

“Look at you,” Billy says, watching the way Steve pants, the way his hair clings to his forehead with sweat. “Fucking look at you,” he groans, and catches Steve in a vicious kiss.

Steve tries to keep rhythm. He really does.

But it's so hard to do anything much beyond letting Billy take and take and take.

The noises he makes-- the high, desperate, keening sounds Billy pulls from him, are muffled against Billy's lips. He's shaking apart, he knows, right at the seams. His body is a livewire, sparking and wild as Billy fucks him. There is nothing beyond this, their bodies meeting, and Steve is *gone* .

The bed moves beneath them, as Billy snaps his hips forward, and Steve sobs as he comes around Billy's cock, body bucking and clenching through it. His own length weeps with it, spilling out

between them, untouched and sharp, something twisting in his stomach.

Billy fucks him through it. Fucks him until there are tears in his eyes. Fucks him as he twitches and writhes from the overstimulation. Fucks him until he can barely breathe, can barely do anything but hold on to Billy's hand, can barely see beyond anything but blind, agonizing pleasure.

There's nothing hotter than seeing Steve torn apart by the force of another orgasm. It's overpowering, depraved, *hot* .

Steve pushes him over the edge as his body tightens around Billy's cock, squeezing him tight and doing it's best to squeeze Billy dry. His last few thrusts are deep and smooth, driving into that tight heat as Steve comes apart underneath him.

It's a rush of unexpected emotion when it comes.

Billy moans Steve's name as it hits him, folding himself over Steve's chest to bury himself at Steve's neck, hips trembling as he comes down from it, teeth clenched and body shaking. It's so much, too much. And he's so *tired* . He never wants this to end, never wants to unravel himself from Steve.

Blindly, he mouths over the bite mark on Steve's neck, tonguing at raw, red skin.

His , Billy thinks, head swimming. Maybe he says it aloud, too.

Gasping in little shakes and tremors, Steve squeezes at Billy's hand in his. He feels completely used, thoroughly blissed, and he drifts on it as they both lay there and catch their breath.

“Yours,” he mumbles, eyes still wet, voice a rough disaster, head a haze of ebbing pleasure, and he's so full of Billy, his thighs and ass and sheets a slick, hot mess of it. “M’yours, Billy.”

It's a testament to how exhausted Billy is that he doesn't even question it. Doesn't think about the future, just the here and now. The present moment. He smiles against Steve's skin and presses his lips to the spot right under Steve's ear.

“You're perfect, baby,” Billy says, and folds Steve up in his arms. “And you're all mine.”

Steve hums and finally goes easy. His arms come up to wind over Billy's shoulders as they lay there and just breathe.

The euphoria is lulling. Soft and sweet and perfect. And Steve can feel the belonging thrum in his bones because as much as he's Billy's -- Billy is his.

When Billy eventually pulls out, soft and easy, he can't help but groan, over-sensitive and tired. He can't imagine how Steve must feel.

His hormones are quieter now, all his instincts dulled by their efforts.

Billy dips a hand between them, dragging it through the mess left on Steve's skin. “Gotta clean you up,” he murmurs. Tired. So tired. “Or you're gonna be so mad.”

Steve lets out a soft sound, and blinks his eyes open slow. He hadn't even realized he'd closed them.

“Don't wanna move,” he says, and he feels *achingly* empty without Billy in him, like he's missing something, and he snuffles out a whine and presses his cheek to the top of Billy's head.

Billy doesn't want to move either. And there's a part of him that wants to keep Steve like this, all messy and sweaty and fucked out. Billy settles for a compromise. He presses a kiss against the corner of Steve's lips and wrangles himself up, mustering some energy from *somewhere* .

In Steve's bathroom he grabs a washcloth and wets it with warm water and brings it back out to Steve's room. Kneeling on the bed, he pulls the cloth over Steve's skin, smoothing over his abdomen, dipping between his legs to get his inner thighs. Carefully, gently, he pulls it over Steve's ass, too. Not enough to truly clean him, but to get the worst of it away. So Billy can still smell himself on Steve, so he'll wake up and know Steve is *his* .

He pitches the washcloth onto the ground and settles back in next to Steve, pulling him tight to his chest.

Billy had never felt like this before. So content, so happy, so attached. He wants to keep it forever, to wrap himself up in this feeling and never let go.

Steve is already half asleep by the time Billy pulls him in close. He tucks his face up under his jaw, just breathing, and when Billy's arms wrap around him, he finally lets himself drift off.

10. this boy is only gonna break your heart

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNINGS: thank the lord for suspension of disbelief because morning sex; fantastic cuddle fucking; bath babes; fUCKING STUPID IDIOT ALPHA BOYS

It's barely dawn when Billy wakes up again. Only the barest beginnings of light are starting to creep through Steve's curtains, casting the room in a quality of light that is hazily dreamlike. Or maybe that's just Billy. His head feels foggy from both sheer exhaustion and the lingering fever of his rut.

It's like he just can't quite claw himself all the way to consciousness. If he weren't completely bathed in Steve's scent, in his essence, he'd be groggy enough to not remember where he was, who he was curled around. But there's no possible way he could forget.

Billy will *never* forget this.

Half awake, Billy buries his face in Steve's neck, nosing at the tendons, savoring the way Steve smells like sleep, like sex. The way he smells like he's *Billy's* .

Steve is breathing evenly in his arms. Peaceful, solid, content. Billy luxuriates in that feeling for a bit, the warmth of Steve's body. But he can't stop himself from pressing a kiss against Steve's neck, against the heat of the bite mark Billy left there. He can't stop himself from mouthing at it, tasting the tang of raised blood vessels, of bruising skin.

Steve mewls a little, groans a bit and turns his face to hide against the pillow. He shivers, though, the way he does when Billy does something that feels good, even in his sleep, and huffs out a little breath like he's fighting the draw of Billy's mouth on his skin.

There's something special about the moment that Billy wishes he could keep forever. Something soft, something perfect -- something

Billy doesn't normally get to have.

"How'd I get so lucky, huh?" Billy asks, in something more than a whisper, as he lets his fingers trace down Steve's rib cage, over every sloping piece and part of him. His skin is still warm with sleep, and Billy kisses the scent off of him, at his neck, at his shoulders. At the hollow, right below his ear. Billy pulls his fingers over Steve's hips, watching the way Steve twitches and shivers, even in his sleep, all tucked up against Billy's front.

It's impossible to ignore that he's hard against Steve's ass. He was hard when he woke up, blinking into the dim light of the room -- but it had been ignorable. Now, with his mouth at Steve's throat, with the taste of Steve on his tongue, Billy is *aching* for it.

So, maybe he can't help himself when he lets his exploring hands drop down to Steve's ass, to dip his fingers between the cheeks, just to feel. To touch. Indulgent. Just for a second.

And *fuck,* Steve is still slick from earlier. With Billy's come and too much lube.

Dragging his fingertips through the mess makes Billy shiver.

Steve's warm and soft under his touch. He's stirring, can't help but rouse under the gentle coaxing of Billy's mouth and fingers.

Still, Steve takes his time. Stretches slow, feet dragging together under the sheets, and he catches Billy's hand as it slides around to rest against the sensitive skin beneath Steve's navel, splayed out and sure, and Steve makes a little sound and turns his head a bit.

"What're you doin'?" he asks, voice slurred with sleep.

Holding Steve taut and steady with the hand on his abdomen, Billy traces a gentle fingertip around Steve's rim while he mumbles at Billy. Jesus, Steve is cute when he just wakes up.

"Morning, baby," Billy says, whispering into Steve's ear.

He doesn't quite push inside yet, just traces over the sensitive muscles tucked between Steve's cheeks, still loose from earlier. Steve

shudders against him, fingers tightening a bit around Billy's wrist.

Steve's breath catches, and he presses back into that touch, eyes blinking open slow.

“Morning,” he says, a little breathless, a little stunned.

Unable to totally help himself, Billy slips a finger inside Steve. It goes so easily, so smoothly, that it pulls a breath of air out of Billy, leaving his lungs empty, his head dizzy. Steve is still so loose, so open, so *ready* for him.

He tests the theory by slowly pressing a second finger in. Like the first, it slides in effortlessly.

Inside, Steve is still so wet, so slicked up. But that doesn’t stop Billy from teasing him for a little while, pulling his fingers through the mess, teasing out shivers and moans from Steve, just because he can.

Steve gasps out, shivering heavy, and his body echoes the heat of the night before -- clenching up tight around Billy's fingers and rocking back. Billy is steady and sure in his touch, and pleasure burns, lazy and slow in Steve stomach as he wakes fully to the sensation.

“Is this my wake up call?” Steve asks, and then moans as Billy curls his fingers in deep.

“Maybe. You like it?”

Billy finds the spot that makes Steve moan and doesn’t leave it alone. He increases and decreases the pressure against it, crooking his fingers just so, milking Steve for all he’s worth.

He likes the way Steve sounds, the way Steve writhes against him. He likes the way Steve’s abdominal muscles tighten underneath his hand, the way he squirms when his hips buck and then push back against Billy’s fingers. It’s hot, especially given that both of them are still cloudy with sleep; it feels like a dream. The best goddamn dream Billy’s ever had.

Steve's body curls over, muscles contracting as Billy strokes in and spreads him out. It feels unreal, Billy's fingers thick and hot and

pressing just right.

“Yeah,” Steve huffs, baring his neck. “Yeah, I do.”

Billy scissors his fingers slightly, just to feel Steve stretch, to feel how lose he is. Billy feels less feverish now, like they fucked most of his rut out of him -- but part of it is still there, burning hot in his gut, making him want to rock his hips forward. He needs the friction, needs the release. He’s so hard, aching for something, but he’s also so enraptured by exploring Steve with his fingers, by coaxing all those little sounds out of him.

Taking Steve’s neck for the invitation it is, Billy bites down on the skin there, mouthing over the spot where he bruised. He knows it’s tender, a little raw, but he couples the action with a twist of his fingers, so that Steve gets just the pleasure of it.

Steve chokes on a sound, on a breath. Pain, sharp and just this side of throbbing, threads just beneath the surface of bliss and makes him gasp. He bucks, a little helplessly, and his fingers curl in the sheets and over Billy's wrist where he's still holding him steady, palm spread over his abdomen.

“God, Billy.” Steve mumbles, dazed and barely able to process the way Billy's breaking him apart on his fingers like this.

“Can I fuck you?” Billy asks, edging a third finger into Steve, even though he doesn’t need to. He works it in so easily, Steve’s muscles all loose and warm and forgiving around his fingers.

Billy pulls his tongue over the warm skin of Steve’s neck, savoring the way the heat has been pulled to the surface. Steve is *his* . He’s marked and claimed.

Groaning, Steve nods, head heavy and limbs heavier, but he presses back against Billy and huffs out a *please* . He's aching, and Billy's fingers only make it worse.

He wants, in the half light of morning, for Billy to fill him, stretch him, rut into him again. Wants to feel it as he spills out inside of him again. Wants to feel his teeth against his throat, despite the

sensitivity.

Carefully, Billy works his fingers out of Steve. It should be gross, the way Steve is still wet from earlier, but Billy's instincts are louder than rational thought. He *loves* it, knowing Steve is still full of his release, just waiting for more.

Billy lines himself up, slotting in behind Steve. He doesn't even bother with more lube, just slowly presses in against Steve until he feels his body start to yield, feeling his cock push slowly into white hot heat.

“Fuck, baby,” Billy says into Steve's ear, arms wrapped around Steve, holding him tight. “God, you feel so good.”

Steve turns his face into the pillow and pants, open mouthed and heavy as Billy sinks in deep. He groans, fingers twitching, and tightens up around him.

It eases the ache a bit. Makes Steve spasm and exhale sharp, but it feels *good* . He shudders and moans, pressing back until Billy's buried to the hilt, filling him perfectly.

“Jesus, you feel so big like this,” Steve mumbles, and he presses his hand over Billy's below his navel, rocking a little. “Feel you so fuckin’ *deep* like this.”

Billy can't argue. There's something about taking Steve like this, with him wrapped up in Billy's arms, that feels so intimate. It's so *much* . Billy feels like he can barely breathe with how close he feels to Steve.

“Yeah? You like it when I fill you up?” Billy asks, rocking his hips gently, driving deep.

He's in no rush. There's nothing he wants more than to savor that is, to drag himself slowly through Steve's warm slickness, to take his time pulling all kinds of sounds out of Steve.

Whining, Steve nods his head. His tongue is too heavy for the words, but it feels so good to have Billy rutting into him like this. Cock long and thick and pressing in against that spot that makes him squirm. Makes his toes curl.

He huffs and grunts as he presses back a little further. Rocks back onto Billy's cock, moaning soft and low, and his own dick jumps as Billy's spreads him that much wider.

“God,” Steve slurs, eyes heavy, body too tired for much else than this slow rock of their bodies. “God, you feel so good.”

Billy sinks his teeth down against Steve’s neck and groans, hips thrusting into Steve. The slide is easy, but Steve is still so tight and warm around him -- it’s perfect.

For a while, Billy just loses himself in it, cock rocking in and out. Breathing deep in the crook of his neck, fingers splayed over his lower torso.

“You think you can come like this?” Billy asks, panting, licking down Steve’s neck like he first had, months ago. “Untouched? Just from my cock inside you?”

Steve moans from between his teeth, hand fisting into the sheets as Billy's words pull at something sharp and desperate in him. He squeezes his eyes shut, body moving with the slow roll of Billy's hips, and yeah. *Yeah* , Steve knows he could definitely come like this, Billy fucking in and out of him steady like this, his cock pressing in and dragging against sensitive nerves like this.

The pleasure of it is too much for him to deny. His body throbs with it. Aches with it.

“Yes,” he breathes, panting softly, shuddering as Billy presses back in, smooth and steady and slick, like he *belongs* there. “Yes. I could -- I can come like this.”

There’s something incredibly hot about the idea of Steve being so turned on, of Steve enjoying this *so much,* that he could come untouched. Just on Billy’s cock. And Billy wants that, so badly.

“You’re so hot like this,” Billy says, lips at Steve’s ear as he drives into him. “Always,” Billy says, *promises* , “but god. Like this, you’re -- something else, Steve.”

This isn’t something that Billy ever thought he’d have. And so he

savors every goddamn second of it, drowning in the pleasure of it. The sensation.

Groaning, Steve reaches back and curves his hand over Billy's thigh, fingers digging in to the flex of muscle. The pressure is steady, and the pleasure of it burns slow, Steve arching as Billy keeps pace, as he keeps driving in.

Billy's hands feel hot on his skin. One splayed over his chest, feeling the sharp rise and fall of Steve's breath, the other still spread low on Steve's abdomen, keeping him tucked close. Steve feels completely consumed by him, like his body is wrapped around him in a way that can never come undone, and it's honestly the only thing that's keeping Steve from bursting at the seams.

Still, pleasure burns. Burns and stokes higher and eats up Steve's breath -- because soon, he's gasping Billy's name, hanging on the edge, the promise of bliss tight in his belly.

Billy is *so close* , so wound tight that he can barely breathe, barely think. The only thing he can concentrate on is the way Steve feels in his arms, the way his body feels as Billy ruts into it. It’s perfect, *so perfect* .

“Baby,” Billy groans. “ *Steve* .” It’s so much, almost too much.

He feels wound up, nearly overflowing -- like a dam, ready to burst. All of his nerves are firing, coiling up and prickling with *need.*

All it takes is Steve moaning out Billy’s name -- once, then *twice* -- to push him over the edge.

Billy comes, hard, thrusting deep into Steve as he groans, as pleasure courses over every inch of him.

He fucks into Steve, into that slick wetness, until he feels his knot start to grow. He didn’t think it would happen -- so sleepy, so exhausted. But he can’t stop it now, can’t help the way it swells at the base of his dick and pushes against Steve’s muscles -- no longer as stretched out as he had been before.

“Steve,” Billy groans, pressing in as deep as he can go. “Steve, I’m

gonna -- I’m gonna. Fuck -- *Steve* . Please.”

“Yes,” Steve doesn't even hesitate, tries to press back more, tries to take him deeper -- and he can feel it, the way Billy fills out inside of him, the way he swells -- and the pressure is perfect and just shy of painful, and Steve cries out as Billy knots him, pushing him that last fraction further until Steve is tightening up and spilling out, coming on nothing but Billy's cock and the heat of his knot. “ *Yes* , god, *Billy* --”

He chokes on a gasp as it finishes rippling through him. As Billy's arms tighten around him. And he has to reach down and squeeze at the base of his own cock, at his own knot, to keep himself from just rutting back in the crests of blind pleasure.

“God,” Steve pants, a little ragged, and he twitches tight around Billy's dick, buried so perfectly in his ass, and his eyes flutter shut as the *full* sensation rocks him to the core. “Fuck, Billy.”

Billy chokes on his own pleasure, on the feeling of Steve’s body tightening around his knot as he comes. It wrings another weaker wave of pleasure out of him, something that starts at the base of his spine and washes upward, coursing over his ribs, his shoulders, his neck. It hums at the bottom of his skull, just lingering there as he hugs Steve tight, refusing to let go.

His knot grows and grows, slowly expanding into Steve, stretching him, filling him.

Billy works one of his hands down, to push past Steve’s hand and wrap around the base of his cock. So that Steve can feel how Billy feels. So that he can feel the ever-expanding pleasure of this exact moment.

Steve gasps and shakes in his arms. His eyes roll back, at the duel sensations of pleasure winding up his spine and searing across his nerves.

His hips give a little jerk, stuttering into Billy's touch, and he groans as he feels the tug of Billy's knot inside of him. Cursing, Steve squirms, his toes curling up as he pants heavy and open mouthed.

“ *Billy,”* he whines, and he can't help the fluttering clench of his body, or the bursts of pleasure it coaxes from his nerves.

Panting, Billy rocks into Steve in short little bursts, hips bucking with the need for just a bit more friction. He already feels over-sensitive, but he can’t stop his body from seeking more. Greedy.

Billy tightens his fingers around the base of Steve’s cock, milking him.

“C’mon, baby,” Billy says.

He can feel it. He can feel the way Steve’s body tightens, the way he’s drawing close again. And there’s nothing more that Billy wants more than to feel Steve come on his dick again.

Steve curls slightly inward, panting out a soundless moan. It's enough-- Billy's voice low and urging in his ear, his fingers wrapped around him, his cock grinding into the heat of Steve's body.

Steve comes with a half-sobbed sound, shaking apart and jerking, spilling out as Billy ruts in harder -- Steve's body working over his length and his knot as his orgasm ripples through him.

“Billy,” he slurs, breathless and flush, dick softening and twitching with oversensitivity.

It’s all that Billy needs to push him over the edge again, dick pulsing another stream of come into Steve.

Billy can’t help the way his other hand slinks down to Steve’s abdomen, to splay over the hot skin there, to pull him closer.

“Steve,” Billy groans, fingers tightening just a bit over Steve’s dick, holding tight.

Billy breathes out a sigh, loose and ragged, right in Steve’s ear. Steve shudders in reply.

“Jesus, Billy.” Steve mumbles, wrapping his fingers loose around Billy's wrists. “Hell of a wake up call.”

“Yeah?” Billy asks, his voice rough and still sleep-heavy.

There’s something comforting about the press of Steve’s fingers against his wrist, something grounding. It’s impossible to forget where he is, who he’s with, how goddamn at peace Steve makes him feel.

Gradually, Billy lets his grip loosen against Steve’s knot, as he feels his own go down. His own breath begins coming back to him, but he can’t help but how dazed and dizzy he still feels.

“Morning,” Billy says with a grin, fingertips tracing over Steve’s lower abdomen, even with his wrist in Steve’s grip.

A little mystified, Billy swallows and presses his palm hot against Steve’s skin.

“You’re so full of me. Jesus.”

Steve groans a little, and he can't help but go a little tight, huffing out a breath as his skin jumps under Billy's touch, feeling heavy with it and the weight of Billy's tone. “Yeah. Yeah, I really am. Fuck, Billy, how many times did we…?”

“Dunno,” Billy says. “Lost count.”

He feels wrung out, depleted. Even the hum of the fever, the itch of energy in his bones feels long gone. Like its no longer driving him -- just giving him enough energy to keep his eyes open. Not that he particularly wants to.

For a moment, Billy is just quiet, appreciating the moment. He presses his lips, gently, to the raw patch of skin on Steve’s neck.

“Think we should shower?” Billy asks.

“And stand?” Steve asks, on a huff of a laugh, and he presses his hand over Billy's at his stomach. “Bath. Let's take a bath.”

When Steve’s fingers lace over his, Billy can’t help but shiver and press his nose to Steve’s neck, breathing him in -- breathing in the scent of the two of them, mingling.

“A bath sounds good.”

Billy gives it a minute before even remotely trying to get up, trying to ease himself out of Steve and smooth his hands over Steve’s skin. Steve makes a small, needy little sound as he withdraws, as he starts to pull away.

He twists over in the cage of Billy's arms and tucks back close, winding himself around Billy with a sleepy, pleased hum. He presses his face into the hollow of Billy's throat and just breathes.

“You feel good,” Steve says, in a half daze.

“So do you,” Billy admits. It feels like too much of a truth, too close to an admonition.

But, this close to Steve’s warmth, with Steve smelling like he’s Billy’s -- he can’t *really* bring himself to care.

“But,” Billy says, drawing a hand over Steve’s spine after Steve moves to tangle his limbs up with Billy’s. “We’re so gross, Steve.” He makes a face. “ *So gross* . And by the time you actually wake up, you’ll just be mad about it.”

“Won't,” Steve says, and wraps himself tighter into Billy's arms. “Smell like you. Can't be mad.”

Billy laughs, full of affection and warmth. He feels full of it, like his chest is going to burst with just how much Steve means to him at this very moment. How much Steve means to him -- full stop.

Jesus, Billy’s got it bad.

“Come on, you lump. Fuck, you’re gonna be so *sticky* if you don’t let me clean you up.”

And that’s what Billy’s offering, isn’t it? He’s offering to clean Steve up like Steve’s his omega, like he’s Billy’s to cherish and take care of. Goddamn, his instincts really are broken. But he can’t bring himself to care.

With a put-upon sigh, Billy wraps his arms around Steve and

wrangles both of them out of the bed. His legs are a little shaky as he walks them into Steve's bathroom, but he just hikes Steve up in his arms, unwilling to let him go. With one hand around Steve, and Steve's arms helpfully around Billy's neck, he manages to turn the bath on and get it running, heating and filling up.

"I'll make sure you smell like me again, after," Billy promises.

Steve hums, practically purrs, and mouths over Billy's throat, tucked up close, steam filling the bathroom. He can't keep his hands off of Billy. Doesn't really know what he'd do if he had to.

There's something restless and wanting in him. Something he can't quite name, but only Billy's touch seems to soothe him. He wants to wrap himself in the safety of Billy's arms for days, for months, for years. Never wants this weekend to end.

He wishes, for a moment, that it was easier. That they could do this, be this, outside of the safety of Steve's house too. But he shoves that thought away for the pleasure of Billy's warm skin against his own.

"Promises, promises." Steve says, kissing under Billy's ear, not even ashamed of the clumsy, lazy way his body is moving, or the bliss drunk way his words seem to come. "Such nice promises. I hope you keep them."

"You think I won't?" Billy asks.

He loves the lazy way Steve moves, the way he smells like sex and sleep, the way the fatigue has laced its way into Steve's bones. It makes him soft, touchable, dreamlike. Like this elaborate fantasy is something Billy can wrap himself up in for hours.

"I promise I will, jesus. Don't get all worked up over it," Billy says with a smirk, biting at Steve's shoulder before he eases Steve down and into the nearly filled tub.

After he deposits Steve into the water, Billy slides himself in behind Steve, squirming until his legs are on either side of Steve.

God, the water is warm. Instantly, Billy realizes how *exhausted* he is. How sore his muscles are. He sets his chin on Steve's neck and lets

out a thoroughly content sigh. “I haven’t taken a bath in ages.”

Steve sinks back against him, head lulling over for him. He instantly seeks Billy's hands, tangling their fingers together.

“It's good,” Steve eases fully into the spread of Billy's legs and against his chest, eyes closing. “You should bathe all the time. You deserve it. Nice things. Good things.”

Billy laughs, but the sound is a little hollow. He doesn’t quite *feel* hollow, though. Just a little detached. This moment -- soft and warm -- is nothing like what Billy’s life is actually like. It’s so divorced with reality that it’s hard to match it up, to tie it all together in a nice little bow.

“I don’t get nice things, pretty boy,” Billy says, kissing at the hollow under Steve’s ear.

For a moment, Billy just hovers there, feeling Steve’s pulse beat under his lips.

“Well,” Billy says, “I don’t get to keep them, anyway.”

Steve frowns, and his fingers go tight in Billy's. He cranes around a bit, eyes fluttering open to look at Billy.

“You should,” Steve says. “You should get to keep whatever you want.”

“That’s not the way the world works.”

Billy pushes Steve forward slightly, if only to avoid his eyes, and scoops some water onto his chest, rinsing off the sweat and come there. Soap helps, even though it smells too floral, too unlike either of them. It’s fine -- he’ll make Steve smell like him again, after the bath. He lathers up Steve’s chest, his shoulders, under his arms -- but avoids his neck, refusing to quite touch that with the soap.

Steve lets him. Sits there and lets Billy clam up and wash him clean of their night and their morning. Lets Billy focus on soaping him up and rinsing him off.

He loses himself a bit in it, too. In the soft way Billy touches him, is taking care of him.

And even if the world doesn't work that way, Steve wants it to. He wants to keep this.

“I can't keep this, then?” Steve asks, catching Billy's wrists, unyielding as he drags Billy's arms around himself, before tilting his head over. “Or your bite? I can't keep that?”

Billy doesn't have an answer for that. He wishes it was easy, that he could just fold himself into Steve and live like this. He wishes the world outside this tiny little bubble they've built wasn't cruel and unforgiving. He wishes he deserved nice things, but he doesn't. Not by a long shot.

“You shouldn't *want* to keep me. I'm an asshole, pretty boy,” Billy says, tightening his arms around Steve. He bites at Steve's ear, just a nip. “Or did you forget the time I broke a plate over your head?”

“How could I? I still have the scar,” as if to make his point, Steve reaches up and pushes his hair back, and there's a thin pink line extending into his hairline, but he twists to look at Billy again. “And guess what? I want to keep this -- *you* -- anyways.”

He means it. Means it with everything he is.

Because as much as that night sucked, as awful as Billy was, Steve knows. He knows what's under the surface -- he has it now, with Billy treating him with care, with tenderness, when Billy could've easily already walked out the door after getting what he wanted out of Steve.

“You weren't even the worst thing that happened to me that night.” Steve says, even though he knows he maybe shouldn't -- but Billy had opened up to him, and Steve thinks maybe it's his turn. It might be the vulnerable, soft way he feels in the wake of all they've done, but he wants to. “And you're far from a bad thing -- an asshole, sometimes, maybe, but -- but I like you and you -- you make me feel… important and good and -- and I wanna keep you. So. I guess the rest is up to you. And if you wanna keep me, too.”

Billy makes a noise deep in his chest. He knows it sounds broken and stupid and pathetic, but that's also kind of how he feels.

“It's not that *simple* ,” Billy says.

Billy's arms shift around Steve, pulling him tighter, closer. Indulgently so, despite his words. His eyes linger on the scar, though, on the place where he knows it disappears into Steve's hair. It's all he'll be able to see now, when he looks at Steve's face.

“I can't just -- *we* can't --” Billy groans in frustration and buries his face in Steve's neck. “I can't be what you want me to be.” His words are mumbled and muffled against wet skin, echoing strangely in the large bathroom.

There's a whole world out there that Steve hasn't lived in, that he hasn't experienced. Billy wishes he had Steve's rose colored glasses, too, but instead he has to come home to Neil Hargrove every day for a reminder. He'd love to pretend that things are fine, that they could work out -- but for how long? How long until Billy slipped up, until Neil found out the truth and came after him? Or, worse yet, came after *Steve* .

“Can't we just -- have this?” Billy asks.

And Steve -- Steve knew this was coming. Knew it when he curled up with Billy on the couch, when he had Billy chase after him up the stairs, when he agreed to keep doing this that night after the party and he sealed it with a kiss.

It doesn't make it hurt any less.

He plasters on a smile though, and shifts to press his back to Billy's chest, so that he doesn't have to look Billy in the eye when he lies.

“Sure,” he says. “If that's what you want, I'm fine with it.”

It's not what Billy wants at all. But what he wants isn't realistic. What he wants is *dangerous* . There are more people like Neil out there in the world and he's not putting Steve in danger for it.

So, Billy just tucks his chin onto Steve's shoulder and takes a long

breath, savoring their closeness. The warmth between them. Before he has to let go at some point.

After a little while, of silence that Billy refuses to admit is likely awkward, he pulls his fingers over Steve's ribs, tracing the lines of them.

“Want me to wash your hair?”

Steve lets out a little breath, but he nods and shifts in the tub, reaching over and grabbing a bottle of something imported his mother brought him back from Italy over Christmas. He holds it out to Billy, and then settles back again.

Billy is so careful with Steve. If this isn't something he gets to keep -- and he knows it isn't, even if he *wants* to -- then by god, he's going to savor it. He works the shampoo into Steve's hair with gentle fingers, lathering and touching until the whole bathroom smells like rosemary and mint and something he can't place. The scent isn't overpowering; it mingles well with the scent of the two of them. When he finishes, he takes his time, leaning Steve back slightly so Billy can take handfuls of water to rinse out his hair.

“You smell *expensive* ,” Billy says with a too-fond huff.

Steve keeps his eyes closed. He tries to savor the feeling of Billy running his fingers through his hair, and tries not to think about whatever scorn he might earn when he opens his mouth again.

“It's how my parents try to make up for being gone all the time,” Steve says. “They can't be here, but, hey, I've got a nice ride and some expensive shampoo. The fridge is never empty. I could never want for anything.”

Billy just hums. There's a tone to Steve's voice that puts him on edge, a stiffness to his shoulders he doesn't like.

Months ago, Billy would've picked that fact apart until Steve bristled and turned away. Now, he doesn't know what to say.

“Okay, well, did they buy you expensive soap, though? Because you're gonna smell like come for a week, if it’s not.” Billy's eyeing the

soap again, but it feels important to at least *not* be a dick about it.

The least he can do is pretend like it's fine, like he's not *sorry* Steve's alone all the time. Like it's no big deal that Billy is learning a little bit more about Steve with every passing moment.

Steve snorts and squints up at him. “It's all handmade bullshit.” Steve says, and then something goes a little bitter on his tongue. “It's all bullshit, Billy. Just expensive bullshit.”

Billy just huffs out a laugh.

“Let me tell you something, Harrington,” and that's not quite right -- here, in this tub, naked and warm, he's *Steve*. “Steve,” Billy amends. “I'm sure you can't smell it, because you're used to this place, but this whole town reeks of bullshit.”

Billy takes the soap and lathers up his hands. Reverently, he starts working the suds all over Steve's skin again. Taking the opportunity to touch and map and claim as much as possible. Just to touch him.

“You gotta look real hard to find the shit that isn't bullshit. And this,” he slides his hand up Steve's torso through the suds, slow and steady, “this doesn't seem like total bullshit to me.”

Steve's expression crumbles a little, and he sits up, pulls away a little, so that Billy can't get a good look at it. He bites on the inside of his cheek, and grabs one of the washcloths draped over the edge of the tub.

Wetting it, he washes the soap away. Washes Billy's touch away.

“You sure about that?” Steve asks, can't help but ask, voice wavering.

Billy knows he should say something dumb, something to deflect. He can't have everything, and it's easier if he lets Steve think he doesn't care. It's easier if Steve doesn't care, too. But there's something about the intimacy of a bathroom, of sharing a bath together, that makes the lie feel impossible, all brittle and broken before he can even think up the words.

“Yeah,” Billy finally says. “I'm sure.”

He grabs the soap and works on his own chest while Steve is leaning forward, while he's pulled away.

“Look,” Billy starts, then stops, then sighs. “Just -- thank you. For this.” And god, he's just the worst at stringing more than two words together. “This wasn't bullshit.”

He needs Steve to walk away knowing that.

Steve twists to look at him again. He feels smaller, somehow, sitting between the spread of Billy's legs. Smaller and more fragile.

Like even the smallest lie could break him apart.

He doesn't find one when he looks at Billy's face. So, he twists the rest of the way around, watering sloshing and threatening to spill over, and he kneels up onto his knees and uses the damp washcloth to help Billy rinse off.

“Okay,” Steve says, after a moment, but his eyes won't meet Billy's, focusing instead on the way the warm water reddens Billy's skin. “It wasn't bullshit.”

Billy knows, suddenly, that this was *too much* to ask of Steve. To ask of both of them. A quick blowjob, or a handjob between friends isn't too much, would've been fine. But this, spending hours fucking and tangled up in each other? It's too much to try and pull himself away from. It's gotten *complicated* and now Billy doesn't know what to do.

“It wasn't,” Billy repeats, watching as Steve smooths a washcloth over his skin.

Even if this is all they get, Billy needs Steve to know that it wasn't bullshit. It's important. It *feels* important.

Billy isn't sure if a kiss would be welcome, so he just reaches out to draw two fingers over the line of Steve's jaw. Gentle. Affectionate. Marking the spot he would kiss, if it felt right, if Steve hadn't pulled so far away.

Steve glances up and he stills, lips parted, expression soft and open. It's as vulnerable as it is treacherously hopeful.

He blinks and Billy's hand moves, slides along his jaw. Steve can't fight the way he shudders, or the way his eyes flutter shut, or the way he leans into that touch. He lets out a breath, and forgets everything else, hands braced on Billy's chest as he leans in and touches their foreheads together.

“Billy, I don't --”

I don't know if I can do this , he almost says.

He sighs, instead. “We should finish up here, and get you some food and some water. You must be starving.”

Billy’s heart catches in his throat, chest too tight, too caged full of barbed wire. He takes one breath, then another, and finally pulls his hand back.

“Sounds good.”

Too soon, the water is draining out of the tub and they're drying themselves off in fluffy towels. Billy smells expensive, and still like Steve. It'll take days to wash off, he knows. There's no way he can go home smelling like this -- Neil will know instantly.

A day or two sleeping in his car never hurt him.

Back in Steve's room, Billy digs through his bag and slips on his own clothes -- he's clawing to wear Steve's -- but he can't ask that. It's too much. He knows they both need to pull back from this.

When he turns, Steve is standing there in a loose pair of sweats and a shirt that’s too big. His smile is tentative, and his hair is still wet-- and Billy’s bite is as plain as day on his neck. He’s gorgeous, and Billy doesn’t know how he’s supposed to walk away from this. From Steve and his big, empty house.

But he knows he has to.

“Ready?” Steve asks.

No. No, I’m not. Not ever.

But he swallows and says, “yes.”

11. no, I don't wanna fall in love (with you)

Notes for the Chapter:

> This one's a doozy...
>
> WARNINGS: massive miscommunications; dumb boys being dumb boys; rumors are the bessstttt; picture me nudging a meatball at brawlite like in Lady and Tramp, except the meatball is Steve Harrington; attempted unsafe/unsane sexual endeavors; surprise ending, kind of, but not really...

“Get in the car,” Billy says, sunglasses over his red-rimmed, sleep deprived eyes. He knows they’re bad; he checked them out in his rearview this morning and *winced* .

He’s got coffee from the diner in a cup in the center console. He grabs that and takes a sip of it, waiting for Max to move her ass off of the curb in front of their house.

“Are you coming, or what?” Billy asks, raising his eyebrows and turning up this new band, Guns N’ Roses on the stereo, just so her answer will be drowned out by the sound of the lead singer’s crooning voice. It’s not bad, Billy thinks.

“I didn’t think you were going to drive me today,” Max says, finally -- *finally* -- opening the door and clambering inside. She’s got her skateboard: good. If she has to skate home, if Billy decides to ditch halfway through the day, she’ll be fine.

“Yeah, well. I was considering leaving you to skate, but I figured, *out of the kindness of my own heart* , I’d deign to drive you.”

“You missed lasagna night,” Max says. “I thought you’d be home yesterday.”

Billy thought he would be, too. But it’s a two-fold problem. Firstly, he smells too much like Steve to set foot inside his house knowing full well that Neil would be home. Secondly, he’s too shaken, too fragile-

feeling, to deal with reality, yet. He wants to live in the safety of his own car for a little while, where he can still smell the barest hints of Steve on him, clinging to his clothes and his skin. His hair still smells like that stupid goddam shampoo -- and Billy knows he'll have to wash it after gym today, but he doesn't *want* to.

"Yeah, well, I wasn't," Billy says.

Once Max is all buckled in, he peels off the curb and screeches down their street, booking it for the school. It's not that he's necessarily in a hurry to get there, but speeding down the small, straight streets of Hawkins is nothing if not therapeutic. Like maybe, if Billy drives fast enough, he can leave this place behind, leave his bullshit feelings behind.

"Did you have a good weekend?" Max asks.

Billy can see her out of the corner of his eye, turned and staring straight at him.

"It was fine."

"Was your *slumber party* with Steve?" she asks, and Billy can hear the teasing lilt to her voice, can see, without seeing, the quirk to the corner of her mouth.

"I slept on his couch Friday night," Billy says. "We got real drunk and then passed out."

It's the truth, whether she wants to believe him or not. But somehow, it makes it a little easier to say. To admit out loud that this weekend wasn't just an elaborate fever dream. Billy still can't believe it himself.

"Where'd you sleep on Saturday and Sunday night, then?"

"Not Steve's couch," Billy says, snapping a little. "It's not any of your business where I slept, Maxine."

His neck hurts from sleeping in his car and it's too early to be wearing sunglasses. His hair is a wreck and he feels rumpled and exhausted. There's too much wildlife in Hawkins -- the strange

sounds of nature kept him from falling too deep into sleep.

A few minutes pass in silence -- or at least, in between bars of Axl Rose's voice -- and then Max speaks again.

"Look, I just think it's good, is all."

"You think *what's* good?"

"That you have a friend," Max says, after a moment's hesitation. "Steve's good. He's nice. I think -- I think you could use someone nice as a friend."

Billy isn't sure what to say to that.

Steve *is* his friend, in a roundabout way, he guesses. If Billy squints, there's friendship there, layered underneath all the heat and the complication. But it's nothing normal, nothing like what Steve should have, what he has with Jonathan or Nancy, or even what he has with the dumb kids that follow him around like ducklings. Billy is sharp and brutal and poisonous, and he's no good for Steve as a friend. He's certainly not good for Steve as *anything else* .

"We're not really friends," Billy says, finally.

"Does Steve know that?" Max asks.

Billy doesn't say anything. He's quiet, until they pull into the school parking lot. Then, when he talks, it's only to tell Max to hurry up and get out of his car.

She throws her skateboard on the ground and kicks a foot up on it. She makes a few feet before she turns around and levels Billy with a stare that he'd maybe be proud of, if he wasn't so tired.

"You deserve friends, you know," Max says. "I'm glad you have Steve."

He doesn't have Steve, not at all. But the sentiment is weirdly warm, coming from her, so Billy can't bring himself to correct her again.

"Yeah, yeah," he says. "Go, before you get a tardy. I'm not waiting

for you after school if you get a detention.”

“Bye, Billy,” she says, a bit fond, rolling off toward the school with something like a smile.

-*-

“Whoa.”

Steve's fingers flex over the wheel, and he doesn't look at Dustin as he climbs in, buckles, and twists to gape openly at Steve. His back molars grind, and he fights the urge to pull his collar up.

“That looks like you went a round with a demodog and lost.” Dustin says. “Big time.”

Steve levels him a dirty look. “Not even a little bit funny.”

“Did Hargrove do that?” Dustin asks, eyes wide and eager.

He's worse than Carol. Nosier, too.

“That's none of your business, shithead.” Steve says, and then pulls into drive.

Dustin’s eyes go wide. “He *did* , didn't he? That dickhole. That *knothead* --”

Steve snorts. “Dustin --”

“-- just wait until I tell the guys. Til I tell *Max* . She'll *destroy* him --”

“Dustin,” Steve says, and something in his tone must give him away, because Dustin goes quiet. “You can't tell anyone where I got it. You and the guys and Max can't tell anyone Billy was at my place. Okay?”

Because as much as Steve would like to broadcast it to the world, as much as he'd like everyone to know that Steve is officially off the market -- and maybe, hopefully, Billy is too -- he *can't.*

No one can know who laid their mark so thoroughly into Steve's skin. No one can know who's claimed him, bone deep, even if it's only

temporary. Because Billy doesn't want that, because Billy's afraid of that, and Steve knows what fear can turn into.

That doesn't mean he can't show it off a little. That doesn't mean Steve has to hide that *he* is maybe, hopefully, no longer open for any romance outside of whoever he let bite into him.

No one has to know who. They just have to know Steve's marked -- thoroughly.

“Is this like… Upside Down secret?” Dustin asks.

Steve swallows and bobs his head. “Yeah. Yeah, it kind of is.”

“Whoa,” Dustin breathes. “Will was right.”

Steve nearly swerves right off the road. “What?”

“He said he thought maybe you guys liked each other,” Dustin says, and then gestures wildly to Steve's neck. “I just don't think he knew *how much* --”

“Dustin,” Steve warns, breathing in slow. “ *No one* .”

“So, like a hairspray secret.”

“Yes.”

Dustin hesitates, and then nods once, firm. “Deal. *If* --”

“Yeah, yeah. Movie night. Friday. You have to ask your mom first.”

Dustin beams. “Done and *done* , Steve.”

Steve rolls his eyes, infinitely fond. He can't help but smile, a little relieved, and he feels his shoulders go easy.

Then, Dustin reaches over and *pokes* at the bruise on the side of Steve's neck.

“ *Hey --!”*

“Does it hurt?”

Steve slaps his hand away. “Jesus, Dustin.”

“I'm gonna have *words* with that guy --”

“ *Dustin* .”

-*-

School is, apparently, the last place that Billy wants to be.

He saw Steve’s car in the parking lot when he’d pulled in, but he hadn’t seen Harrington lingering, so Billy had stalked inside to see if he could catch a glimpse of him. He can’t help the way his instincts scream and sing at him, trying to go for *protective* and *possessive,* even while his brain tells him to back off, that Steve isn’t *his* . That this weekend, while *not bullshit* , wasn’t for Billy to keep.

He just wants to see.

Unfortunately, he doesn’t get to have something so simple. No matter where Billy looks, he can’t *find* Steve, can’t catch hide nor hair.

He does, however, *hear* about Steve.

The hallways are a titter with Steve’s name. The air is saturated with whispers about good ol’ King Steve. He’s the first goddamn word on every gossipy teen’s lips.

It doesn’t take Billy long to piece it together.

Did you see it? Sherry, two lockers down from Billy’s, tells some redhead he doesn’t know. *That* ***mark*** *on his neck? Biggest lovebite I’ve ever seen.*

Billy slams his locker and stalks away.

In first period, he hears, whispered from the desk directly behind him: *He’s positively glowing! Harrington’s definitely got a new someone. I mean, haven’t you seen? He’s like, five times hotter than normal. You think I can get a piece of that?*

Billy snaps his pencil in two.

You think someone took him down a peg? Tommy asks Billy, halfway through third period. *Or do you think he got laid?*

Billy ignores him.

But no matter how many times Billy hears about Harrington, no matter how many *other* people have seen Steve -- and it feels like the whole school has seen him by lunchtime -- it's like Billy just can't lay eyes on him. Like Steve is specifically avoiding Billy personally. And -- Billy just wants to *see* Steve. And now that he knows that Steve is apparently wearing the mark on his neck with pride -- not *hiding it* -- Billy can barely resist the urge to hunt him down through the hallways of the school. He wants to look at the bruising on Steve's neck, wants to run a guilty, greedy finger over it. He wants to prove to himself that it was real, that it *happened* .

Billy skips lunch and slips outside for a cigarette. One turns to two, which turns to three -- and soon, Billy's pacing outside the back entrance to the school, snarling at anyone who comes near him and leaving butts on the ground like he's marking his territory. Making the space his.

Like a taunted animal, he can't shake the agitation from his bones, the feeling that he's being teased by the thought of Steve. The fact that everyone's seen him, except for Billy.

He can't even *smell* Steve. The only whiffs he gets are from his own clothes, faint and clouded by Billy's scent.

It's then that he catches a glimpse of him, ducking through the parking lot, likely toward his own car.

Like the animal he is, Billy starts after him, stalking toward the lot with long strides, until he rounds on Steve's Beemer -- and Nancy, Jonathan, and now Steve -- all perched atop the hood.

"Ain't this a pretty picture," Billy drawls.

And it is. Or, rather, *Steve* is.

He can see, now, why his name has been rolling off of everyone's tongue today. Which is funny, because he's wearing jeans and a t-shirt and the same, old ratty sneakers he always is, jacket tied around his waist-- but the bite.

The bite is *on display* . He's doing nothing to hide it, nothing to cover it, and it's just as pretty as the first one. A mess of purple and red and yellow, blood raised beneath the surface of his skin, and slipping beneath his collar-- hinting that it goes *lower* or that there are *more* . And Steve-- Steve's wearing it like a damn badge of honor.

"Billy," he says, and his eyes are a little wide, but then Nancy is sliding off the hood of the Beemer, and Steve's eyes are going wider. "Oh, shit."

The sharp *crack* of Nancy Wheeler's palm across Billy's cheek practically *echoes* in the empty lot.

"You're a real son of a bitch, Billy Hargrove."

"Nance," Steve scrambles, moving to slide off the hood too, but then Jonathan catches him by the back of the shirt, stopping him, eyes dark and narrowed on Billy. " *Hey.* Let me go-- It's *fine* ."

"It's not fine," Jonathan says, as Nancy crosses her arms over her chest, standing between Billy and Steve.

Oh , Billy thinks, a little dumbly -- *that was unexpected* . His head is still reeling, his cheek, still stinging, from the force of Nancy's slap. It's kind of delightful, in a sharp, biting sort of way. Brisk, like stepping outside to a burst of cold air.

A better wake-up call than diner coffee, that's for sure.

Billy can't help but grin, wide and thrilled. He's fucking *elated* , veins buzzing with the thrill of pain. The prospect of a fight.

"Aw," Billy says, eyes flicking between the three of them. At Steve and his bodyguards. He can barely keep his eyes off of Steve's neck, but he has to, with the way Nancy and Jonathan look only seconds away from throwing down. "Feeling a little protective, huh?"

He doesn't know how much they know, but he can't stop the way his stomach twists, the bite it brings to his words. He's a little scared, a little excited, and a lot ready to take another punch. All Billy knows is that they know it was *him* -- and that's all that's important.

Billy raises his eyebrows at Jonathan, and *that's* a rush. "Or is it that you don't like the look of his neck with someone else's bite on it?"

Jonathan *growls* . And the wide-eyed, owlish look Steve gives him is *priceless* .

"What we don't *like* ," Nancy spits, big eyes bright and angry. "Is when assholes like you roll up thinking you own everything."

"Nancy--" Steve tries to pull free again, and his eyes are darting between his friends and Billy, like he's trying to figure out what it would take to get free and get between them. "I told you, it's not what you *think* --"

Jonathan's fingers curl tighter into Steve's shirt, and he doesn't look away from Billy. Not once.

"What kind of shitty alpha *forces* someone to submit?" he asks, tone dripping with disgust.

Billy *laughs* . Delighted. He can't not. It's absolutely absurd and delightful and goddamn hilarious.

Billy laughs and Steve balks and Jonathan growls. Nancy -- well, Nancy crowds back in on Billy. She's lucky she's not an alpha. If Jonathan had hit him, moments ago, Billy would already be throwing punches. After all -- they *are* standing between him and Steve.

"This is precious," Billy says, still shaking with laughter, taking a step back only for Nancy to advance in on him again. "What, are you gonna hit me again?" he taunts.

Bold, he even leans down, licking his lips, and presents her with his cheek.

"Go on. It's all yours."

He’s not surprised when he hears the slap -- only to feel the sting a moment later.

Billy pulls back, ducking out of Nancy’s range again. “ *Damn* !” he hoots, way too giddy. “You’ve got quite the entourage, King Steve.”

“ *Hey,* ” Steve tears from Jonathan's grip, shoving off the hood, and when Nancy tries to follow after Billy again, Steve wraps his arms around her and scoops her up. “That's enough.”

Nancy yelps, feet kicking. “Steve Harrington, put me *down.”*

He does, turning her away, until his back is to Billy, and sets her back in her own two feet. Jonathan is standing now, too, hands curling and uncurling at his sides -- but Steve places himself between Billy and them.

“That's enough --”

“Steve, we're just trying to help --”

“He deserves worse if he made you --”

“He didn't *make me* do anything,” Steve says, voice raising over both of theirs. “Jesus.”

Nancy falters, blinking up at him and then over his shoulder at Billy.

Steve's back is still to him, but Billy can see the tension in the line of his shoulders. Should be able to smell it, too, the heat and the hint of Billy still clinging to him. But instead, there's nothing.

There's *nothing* .

He *hates* it.

The sting of it is immediate and gut-wrenching. It rubs him the wrong way, against the grain, riling up his instincts like static electricity in the air. Billy clenches his fists and is so ready to swing, so ready for Nancy or Jonathan to come at him again.

But that’s not what he wants.

What he *wants* is to coil a hand around Steve's neck, to make him smell like Billy again, to make him smell like he *should* .

"Is that it?" Billy taunts, over Steve's shoulder, trying -- posturing -- to step past him, but also unwilling to to actually make the move. He could -- if he had truly made Steve submit. If he had, Billy would have all the power. But he didn't, and he doesn't.

Billy finds that he doesn't necessarily *want* to have power over Steve, doesn't want to push past him without a go-ahead that he knows he's never going to get. They're on even footing, now -- and Billy *likes* that.

He knows Jonathan sees it, sees the way Billy won't step past Steve, and it's kind of thrilling. Kind of terrifying, too.

"Oh," Jonathan says, like something's just clicked into place, and his posture relaxes -- and somehow that's *worse* .

Nancy looks over at Jonathan, curls whipping around. "Oh?"

Glancing between Steve and Billy, Jonathan nods, and he very slowly, very carefully, takes Nancy by the wrist and pulls her back a step, away from them -- away from *Steve* . He meets and holds Billy's gaze for a long moment, before looking at Steve.

"We're going to head inside," he says. "See you after class?"

" *What* ?" Nancy nearly jerks away, but her face is twisted up in confusion.

"Yeah," Steve nods, shifting on his feet. "I'll talk to you guys later."

"Steve --" Nancy tries again, but Jonathan pulls her, gently, back another step.

"He'll explain later," Jonathan says. "Won't you, Steve?"

"Yeah. I'll-- yes. Later."

Nancy looks like she wants to argue. Her lips purse up, and she levels a narrow eyed look Billy's way, but when Jonathan pulls again, she

goes. Following after him toward the school.

Billy stays quiet as they go.

Steve doesn't turn to look at him until they're gone.

“Well,” Billy huffs. “There goes that secret.”

He’s trying not to panic, because he knows, he *knows* Jonathan knows. Sure, maybe he doesn’t, maybe he assumed something *different* -- but Billy’s got no idea *what* else he could’ve put together. And now that Jonathan knows, Nancy will know soon, too.

And sure, Billy never truly submitted to Steve. Never bared his neck for Steve to bite into -- but he might as well have. He let Steve scent him, and he instinctively refused to cross Steve, even though Steve’s the one bearing Billy’s mark. The footing is even. Even skewed in Steve’s favor. And isn’t *that* a little terrifying.

Steve’s the one with the pretty mark, and Billy’s the one standing behind him, ready to go to his knees.

“Hey, no. They don't -- they don't know, and they don't have to know.” Steve says, and his hands flex at his sides. “All they'll know is that I yielded to you. Willingly.”

“You sure?” Billy asks, frustratingly off-guard, off-balance.

He shouldn’t be so quick to ask for reassurance from Steve, and that’s a problem too. Just a symptom of the whole, larger thing.

“Jesus,” Billy says, running a hand through his hair.

Steve stares at him.

“ *Jee-sus* ,” Billy says again, lighting up another cigarette just for something to do with his hands. “Wheeler’s got spunk. You’re lucky it wasn’t Jonathan that got me. I would’ve torn him apart.”

Steve presses his lips thin, like the idea of Billy laying into either of his friends makes him want to recoil. But he shuffles forward a step, nearly reaches out, and then drops his hand again.

“She knows how to hit,” Steve says, like she's slapped him once before too-- maybe she has. Billy’s heard all about the *King Steve* he missed. “Do you want some ice for it? It's red.”

Billy just shrugs. “Nah. Doesn’t hurt too bad. I’ve had worse, pretty boy.”

And he has. He’s used to it. A slap is nothing compared to a backhand or a punch. At least Wheeler isn’t the type to wear rings -- that’s the worst.

After a beat, Billy’s eyes fall to Steve’s neck, to that bruise he’s wearing so proudly. The grin slowly creeps back to his face. “Looks like somebody got you real good there, huh?”

Billy’s fingers itch to touch, to brush over the skin of Steve’s neck. It would be warm to the touch, Billy thinks. Hot, under his fingertips.

Steve ducks his head, and he's not smiling, but he's blushing. “I wanted to show it off. I know you -- well, I'm wearing a scent blocker. Just in case.”

“I can tell,” Billy says, too fast, too put out. If anything, he sounds pouty -- and he *knows it* .

But it’s no secret that Billy likes making Steve smell like him. Desperately, he aches to dip his head close, to draw his tongue over Steve’s neck in the ultimate display of dominance, right up there with just chomping down.

“Is it sore?” he can’t help but ask, since he can’t touch, can’t press down to gauge Steve’s reactions.

Steve glances up, worrying his lower lip between his teeth. “Yeah. A bit.”

Billy doesn’t say *sorry* , because he’s not. His mark is there on Steve’s neck for *everyone* to see. And they *have* . It’s gratifying that no one can shut up about it -- at least now that Billy has gotten a good look at it. Before, it had been annoying. Now, he’s damn sure he’s going to hell for pride and pride alone.

“God, I wanna touch it,” Billy says, enraptured. “It’s so weird -- that you don’t smell like me. That you look like that, but that I can’t smell it.”

Steve shrugs, arms crossing over his chest, looking away. “You said I couldn't keep it. I wanted to prove you wrong. This way, I can keep it, and you're safe. The gossip mill has been churning out plenty of rumors, so. No one knows it's yours.”

No one knows I'm yours, goes unsaid.

And that's great and terrible all at once.

Billy takes one breath, then another. For one single, solitary moment, he wishes he had one to match. Even if it wasn't on his neck -- just somewhere, *anywhere* else. He wishes he had let Steve get his teeth on him.

There's something inside him that says he won't ever get that chance.

He's not sure if he's relieved or disappointed.

“You *are* king of the rumor mill today. I heard you got that from three separate people at the same time,” Billy laughs, deflecting. “How was your weekend orgy?”

“Almost as wild as my last minute trip to New York to meet up with the debutant my parents are arranging for me to marry,” Steve says.

“Well. I don't *think* you're married,” Billy says. “I don't see a ring, anyway. But I do see some evidence of a fun weekend.”

Billy grins, and it's wide enough to crack his face, it feels like.

“Oh, no. We're just engaged.” Steve replies, but he's grinning too, a little bashful. “And it turns out, she wasn't fond of waiting until the wedding night.”

“Clearly,” Billy says, making a show of looking Harrington up and down. Like he's checking out the damage, instead of surveying a job well done.

“Looks like she rode you hard and put you away wet,” Billy says, though it's a total lie.

Steve looks *good* . He's fucking glowing, those girls weren't wrong. Like all those orgasms gave him a little something extra, a nice spring in his step. And certainly something to remember his weekend by.

Billy knows he looks rough in comparison. No sleep and a night spent in a car typically don't play well with his features, but most of it is attitude. So he pretends he looks good and people fall for it, mistaking arrogance for good looks.

“Unfortunately, there wasn't any riding involved.” Steve shrugs, and his grin is a little crooked. “We're saving that for next time.”

Billy’s gut goes white hot.

He swallows, eyes trained on Steve and his goddamn grin. He looks so *sincere* -- Billy wants nothing more than to kiss him.

“Yeah? Sounds like a good time.”

Steve hums, like he's considering whether or not it does sound like a good time, and he shuffles closer a step. “Well, I guess that depends.”

Billy’s eyes narrow. He can't help but lean in a little closer to Steve, too.

“Oh? What's it depend on, pretty boy?”

“On how soon it'll happen,” Steve says, and there's something delightfully wicked in his eyes, in the curve of his smile, like maybe he knows just what he's doing to Billy, right now, talking about what they're talking about and stuck at arm's length. “Because, I gotta say, I had a *really* good time. And there's just this… *itch* I can't quite scratch on my own, now. Went half crazy trying all night.”

And that -- that's a goddamn beautiful picture. Of Steve, tangled up in his own sheets, trying to get himself off on the memory of them.

Billy shivers. He knows it's obvious, full-bodied and visible, because he watches Steve grin at the sight of it. It's a brilliant look on him,

and coupled with the bite, it's almost too hard to resist just dragging Steve in for a vicious kiss right here, right now, in the school parking lot.

Instead, Billy makes a frustrated noise in his throat. Just to make damn sure Steve knows how interested he is. As if there was any doubt.

“When're you free next, pretty boy? Can't let an itch like that go unscratched, you know.”

Steve purses his lips, head tilting as he looks at him. “I'd say tonight, but you look like you could use a good night's sleep -- not a tumble in my bed.”

The idea tugs a laugh out of Billy's throat. “Yeah,” Billy says. “Because *that's* likely.”

Sleeping in the Camaro again isn't gonna get him any restful sleep. But Steve doesn't know that he can't go home yet, that he doesn't *want* to go home yet.

“I do my best work when I'm tired,” Billy says, instead.

Steve's smile is a sweet one. “That's probably true -- but if you come over looking like that, the most you're getting from me is a hot dinner and a guest bed to crash in.”

Billy wants to take it, the charity, the offer of Steve's warmth. But he can't. He *can't.* Billy can't let himself get attached, can't play pretend with Steve that this is something they can have.

He’ll break his own heart, that way.

“Rain check, then?” Billy asks.

Steve's expression falters, and Billy can see the way he forces his smile after, the tightness around the eyes. “Yeah. Sure. Rain check.”

He clears his throat and steps away, steps back from Billy. Gesturing over his shoulder toward the school, Steve shuffles.

“I guess I should go find Nancy and Jonathan,” he says.

“Your fierce protectors,” Billy says, with a faint hint of a smile.

It's good, that Steve has them. He deserves good friends.

“See you when it's nicer out, huh?” Billy says.

Steve's face pinches a bit, but he nods as his throat works. “Sure. When it's nicer.”

As Billy watches Steve walk back to the school, he gets the impression he stumbled somewhere along the line. That he fucked this up royally.

He just doesn't know where.

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Steve hides the mark the next day.

He wears an old polo with a high collar, and buttons it up as far as it will go, until he feels like he's choking. Dustin doesn't comment on it, or on the shadows under Steve's eyes from the same nightmare he has, it seems, every time he thinks he's figured things out, only for the earth to shift beneath his feet.

Nancy, however, does.

“You look exhausted,” she says, when he steps out of the Beemer.

“Funny,” Steve huffs, throwing his bag over his shoulder. “I feel exhausted.”

Her lips purse, and her eyes linger near his neck -- narrowing, even though he'd told her the day before that he willingly and willfully let Billy Hargrove bite him, and that he and Billy are sort of, kind of, maybe friends -- before she glances back up to meet his eyes. “What happened?”

“Restless night.”

“You know that's not what I mean, Steve.” Nancy rolls her eyes, but Steve is already walking to the school's entrance and she has to trail along behind him. “Mike told me he saw Billy at your place this weekend.”

Steve bites down on his cheek to keep from cursing. “Yeah. He came over, had a few beers, enjoyed my pool. Hung out.”

Nancy catches him by the arm. “Steve. I know you're not telling me something. And I know it's tearing you up. Please. Just… talk to me.”

Standing there, outside of the school, Nancy's hand on his arm, Steve yearns for easier times. Times when he could scoop her up and kiss her until she forgot what she was asking for. And for before that, when he could blow her off, walk away, and not feel bad about it.

He can't do that, now. But he can't tell her either.

“I can't,” Steve shakes his head, and pulls away. “I'm sorry, Nance.”

He gets two steps before she's calling after him -- and he's lucky they're alone, that no one is close enough to overhear.

“Why are you hiding his bite today, Steve? What happened?”

And Steve -- Steve feels that familiar pit in his stomach. The same one he felt yesterday when Billy had smiled at him and said *rain check* but had meant *I don't want what you want* . The same one that had kept him up all night, imagining Billy's face opening up into a million razor sharp teeth to eat Steve's heart whole.

His fingers go tight around the strap of his bag. He glances over at Nancy, and he knows he shouldn't, but he can't help it. Can't help the tightness in his throat or the way his chest feels too small. He smiles, small and tight, and shrugs a shoulder.

“He doesn't want to keep me,” he says.

For a moment, Nancy just stares at him. Then, she lets out a small sound, and Steve can see her heart breaking a little for him, right over her face.

“Oh, Steve.”

Steve clears his throat. “I'll see you later, Nancy.”

He shoves into the halls and away from Nancy's big, worried eyes. Loses himself in the mess of people heading to class. Tries to forget about everything else outside of putting one foot in front of the other-- especially the bite he has carefully hidden under his collar and the scent on his skin that no one can smell.

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Billy doesn’t see Steve that day. He doesn’t get to see Steve in his stuffy polo, doesn’t get to see Steve’s hunched shoulders or dark circles under his eyes. Even when Billy looks for him -- and he checks *everywhere* -- he doesn’t find him.

Billy *does* see Wheeler, who shoulder checks him hard enough to make him stumble and then bark out a laugh at her retreating back. He sees her find Jonathan, who gives Billy an equally withering glare, before they disappear around a corner of the hallway. He doesn’t see either of them again.

It’s almost like Steve isn’t at school. Billy briefly entertained the possibility -- before he’d gotten wind of the new rumors circulating today.

I hear it’s worse. Bad enough that he had to cover it up , Billy hears.

*Yeah? Well, I heard it’s fresh. Like -- **permanent** fresh. Like, gonna* scar, someone else says. Billy shivers at that one, at the idea that Steve’s sporting something that will scab and scar on him. Something more deep than a promise. But Billy knows that one’s not true, that Steve’s just bruised. That maybe Steve had enough of being the center of attention.

Or maybe, just maybe, Steve has changed his mind.

Maybe he regrets it, maybe he hates seeing the healing bruise on his neck that Billy left for him. A reminder of their time together. The thought of *that* makes Billy’s stomach twist in uncertainty, in a kind of anxiety he doesn’t often feel.

Billy thought, maybe, that they had left on alright terms. But the impression that he had stumbled, had stepped *wrong* -- it's getting worse and worse with each passing minute.

It's killing Billy, not being able to see Steve.

He hears about him all day, little whispers around corners, sharp words behind cupped hands.

Steve Harrington is *everywhere* -- and yet, he's nowhere.

Billy loiters by his car, but the Beemer is long gone by the time he even makes it outside after basketball. Whatever. He has to drop Max off at the arcade after AV lets out, anyway.

He slept in the car again, and he's starting to look worse for the wear for it. Not that it matters. He has to go home tonight to grab clothes, to face the harsh reality of his actual life. To face Neil, who doubtless will be annoyed that Billy's been absent from the Hargrove household. But, as long as Billy remembers to shuttle Max around on time like a goddamn taxi driver, the punishment is never *too* bad.

Max is quiet when she folds herself into the passenger seat of the Camaro when she wanders back from AV club. Billy tosses his cigarette to the ground and plunks himself down in the driver's seat, exhausted and weary and disappointed that he hasn't seen Harrington. Annoyed, that he has to go home. Tired of everything.

They're on the road before Max turns on him and slugs him straight in the arm with a tiny fist.

"What the hell did you do to Steve?"

And honestly, Billy doesn't expect the venom behind her words, just like he hadn't expected the punch to his arm.

"Nothing?" Billy says, because, other than the *glaringly obvious* , which he's not going to tell Max about anyway, Billy hasn't done a thing.

"Don't *lie* ," Max hisses.

She's got this whole new *thing* about lying, now. Like she and her friends are all bound by the virtue of truth, or some bullshit like that. It's weird.

She slugs him again, and it doesn't hurt, but he grabs her fist anyway. Long fingers encircling her own, calm. Patient. He's not sure where the sudden wave of serenity came from, but he'll take it.

"Don't do that," Billy says.

He feels her relax in his grip. He lets go after a beat.

"Just tell me what you did," Max says, exasperated. Like all the fight just drained out of her. "I thought you guys were friends."

"I told you. I didn't do anything. He was fine when I last saw him."

Max is quiet for a moment.

"What's wrong with him?" Billy asks, breaking her silence.

Billy takes a wrong turn, goes the long way around to the arcade. He wants to lengthen the drive, suddenly hungry for every detail he can dig up about Steve. The uncertainty he felt earlier gnaws at the base of his rib cage, sharp and acidic. Ignoring it really isn't an option.

"Tell me," Billy says, when Max says nothing.

"I don't know," she snaps. "He's just not good."

"Oh, yeah, that's real descriptive, Maxine."

"He's just *not good!* I know it was you, you had to have done something."

And doesn't that just make Billy feel like a goddamn treasure, because he's starting to get a sinking feeling that it he *did* do something. That obviously, Billy is the reason that Steve is *not good* .

"Okay," Billy says, after another moment of silence. "Okay, sure. I did something." It's more than he should admit to her, but it's not like he has anyone else to talk to.

“What’d you do?”

“I don’t know. You think maybe he’ll tell me?” Billy asks.

“Fat chance,” Max says.

“Yeah,” Billy laughs. “I didn’t think so, either.”

The Beemer is at the arcade when Billy pulls into the lot.

Max nudges him in the arm, shoving at him the second they spot Steve. “Go talk to him!” she says.

Billy doesn’t get a chance to figure out of he’s nervous or excited or hesitant, because Steve just raises his hand up in a wave, smiles a tight, fake smile at the both of them, and then pulls his car straight out of the lot before Billy even has a chance to park.

Seconds stretch in silence as Billy pulls the Camaro into a space.

“Well,” Max says, finally. “I guess whatever you did was pretty bad, huh?”

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Billy’s heart is pounding when he pulls up in front of Harrington’s house. Steve’s car is the only one in the driveway, which bodes well. At least he doesn’t have a reason to keep on driving.

He’s still not sure how he feels about that.

Half of him wants to give up, to just duck away and not face this head on -- whatever it is. But the other half of him knows that he has to, that he can’t just let this fester.

Besides, it’s either that or go home.

Billy could do without the punch to the face.

Unless whatever he’s done warrants punching from Steve. In which case -- well, at least he’s prepared.

Billy rings the doorbell like a respectable human, shifting from foot

to foot on Steve Harrington's doorstep. When no one answers, Billy rings it again. Then, after a couple minutes, he just leans on the door, smacking at the wood with the palm of his hand.

"Harrington! Open up! I know you're in there."

The door swings open a second later.

Billy catches himself, after stumbling forward, no longer having anything secure to lean on with the door no longer there to hold him up.

Steve isn't sure what Billy is doing on his doorstep. Isn't sure why he's there, pounding at his door, looking agitated and anxious and exhausted all at once.

But he is. And Steve has to bite back the urge to usher him inside, throw a blanket over him, and coax him into sleep. Or, worse, reach out and smooth the furrow of his brow away with his fingertips and his mouth.

"Jesus, Billy." Steve frowns, wiping his hands off on a dish towel, and there's tomato sauce on his polo where he'd spilled when the bell first rang. "What is it? The end of the world?"

Now that he's here, Billy has *no idea* what he's supposed to say.

Steve doesn't look much better than Billy does. Billy's eyes dart over him, taking in the dark circles under his eyes, the exhaustion in his posture -- the way his polo is still buttoned up, all the way to the top. Billy can still see a bit of the bruise poking out the top. He tries not to stare too hard at it.

"You're avoiding me," Billy says, jumping straight to the point, bypassing any and all pleasantries that had been ready on his tongue.

Hey, at least it's better than *what's wrong with you?*

Steve blinks at him. "No, I'm not."

He's lying. And he's lying *badly* .

Billy can be stupid about a lot of things, but he's damn smart when it comes to *people* . At least, people lying to him, anyway.

"Uh huh," Billy says. "And Nancy Wheeler's my new girlfriend. What other lies are we telling each other today?"

He raises his eyebrows, daring Steve to do it again. To lie to his face while he *knows* Billy knows.

Steve's mouth twists up, and he huffs out a short breath before stepping back, stepping aside. "Come in."

He waits until Billy does before shutting the door behind him and locking it. Then, he brushes by, padding toward the kitchen.

"Was there something you wanted to talk to me about that made my avoiding you so troublesome?" he asks over his shoulder.

Left alone for a moment, Billy grits his teeth in the foyer of Steve's house. He takes a breath, then another, and then finally follows Steve into the kitchen.

God forbid I wanted to talk to you , Billy thinks. By the time he makes it into the kitchen, Steve is already back at the stove, so Billy leans against the counter. It's weird to think that only a few days ago they were crowding up against each other in this space. Now, he feels like he can't even get close to Steve without spooking him, without being flat out rejected.

"Figured you could tell me what I did wrong, so I don't do it again," Billy says. "Because clearly it was something."

Months ago, Billy wouldn't have even *admitted* to being wrong. Now, he's readily saying it out loud.

Steve falters as he stirs in some wine, spilling over his fingers a little, and he sets the bottle down too loudly, too quickly. He doesn't-- he doesn't know what Billy *wants* . What Billy's doing here, considering yesterday, and his blatant disinterest in coming over again. In his disregard of Steve's offer.

But he's standing here, now, in Steve's kitchen, demanding answers

for a problem Steve didn't think was a problem. He thought maybe showing the bite off was too much, that Billy needed space, so Steve was giving him that.

He says as much.

"You didn't do anything wrong," Steve says, sucking his fingers clean, and the chardonnay is sharp on his tongue. "After yesterday, I thought you'd prefer if I backed off."

Billy looks -- well, he looks a little dumbfounded, honestly.

He feels it, too.

As much as he wants to focus on Steve licking wine off his fingers, he finds he can't. He's much too preoccupied with the problem at hand.

"Why -- the fuck would I want you to back off?"

"Oh, c'mon, Billy." Steve rolls his eyes, and his smile is small and self-deprecating as he shakes his head. "When it was—When we'd been talking about sex, *just sex* , it was fine. But --"

Steve lets out a sharp breath, stilling as he stirs. He stares down at the sauce, red and slowly bubbling, and he bites down on the inside of his cheek.

This is stupid , he thinks to himself. *You're so goddamn stupid* .

"But then I tried to make it something more than that," he admits, voice small, and he clears his throat and forces himself back to task. "And you weren't interested. Which is *fine* . Really. I just figured-- well, I figured you'd want some space."

Billy wants to groan, to clench his fists, to punch a wall out of sheer frustration. Instead, he just grits his teeth and closes his eyes for a moment.

There's no easy answer to this question.

What Billy wants, what he's *interested in* is not something that either of them could have. It's stupid at best, and dangerous at worst, and

Billy isn't about to do that to Steve.

"You said it was fine," Billy says, remembering their stilted conversation in the tub. "Just this. What we had."

Billy gestures between the two of them. Steve doesn't look at him. Billy sighs, then, and tries to ignore the tightness in his chest.

"Look, if you -- if *you* don't think it's fine, if *you* don't want it --" *If you don't want me* , Billy thinks, desperately, "-- then that's fine. But you could at least tell me, so I don't --" *spend all day looking for you* , he doesn't say. "So I don't show up at your house and bother you in the middle of dinner," he finishes.

"I just said it was fine," Steve says, tone a bit clipped. "I just-- I overstepped. Got my wires crossed. It's just fucking. So we don't need to worry about anything else. It's fine."

"Yeah," Billy says. "It definitely sounds like it's fine."

And Steve doesn't *look* fine. And that doesn't make Billy feel good about *any* of it.

His brain ticks through the options, and none of them are good. But he can't help but be reminded of Max, in the car yesterday, telling him that she was glad Billy and Steve were friends. Because Steve is a good friend. And -- he *is* . And Billy isn't willing to lose that. Even if Steve has now lied to his face multiple times.

"Look, you asshole," Billy says, incapable of full sincerity, he knows. "I like having you in my life, alright? So if we need to stop fucking to make that happen, then that's what we do."

Steve stops.

Stops moving. Stops breathing. Stops everything.

Then, he sets the wooden spoon aside on the counter, turns the burner off, and wipes his hands. When he turns, Billy is still leaning there, still staring at him. Steve feels something tight and terrible in his chest. Something he can't ignore-- not even if he tried.

“No,” he says, and then steps forward, into Billy’s space, and he catches Billy by the front of his shirt and pulls him close. “I don’t want to stop.”

His eyes dart over Billy’s face-- over his brows, his cheeks, down his nose, and lingers on his mouth. Then, he leans forward and presses his lips over Billy’s *hard* . Firm and unyielding and unquestioning.

Billy goes soft under Steve’s touch, under his lips. He kisses back, just as hard -- but he feels all of his jagged edges go a little velvety, a little rounded. Like Steve is the relentless ocean, washing away at all his sharp corners, like Billy’s a piece of broken glass, tumbled about in the waves.

A noise bubbles up from his chest and Billy loops his fingers into Steve’s belt loops, pulling him close, closer, until there’s no space between the two of them at all. Just clothes and heat and all of the things Billy’s left unsaid.

“Fuck,” Billy whispers against Steve’s lips.

And then he moves, pulling Steve until Billy’s back is against the counter, until Steve is the one caging him in. He gives Steve the edge, the advantage, the power.

Steve presses in flush, bracing a hand on the counter behind Billy. He's burning. Burning and hungry and he doesn't want this to stop -- refuses to let it.

Refuses to let his own feelings get in the way of keeping Billy's hands on him or his mouth pressed to his own.

Steve bites at Billy's lip. Drags his teeth against his jaw when he pulls away, panting soft, pressing his thigh between Billy's. He rocks, feels Billy's length pressing to him through his jeans, and groans when he feels that Billy's already half hard.

Then, he drops to his knees.

“Fuck,” Billy says again, as Steve fumbles with the button on Billy’s jeans. His hands go to Steve’s hair as Steve starts to work the zipper down, fingers threading into that soft mess.

Steve's thumbs are tucked into the elastic of Billy's briefs, pulling, before Billy snaps to his senses.

He grabs Steve by the wrists, stilling his movements. Stopping him.

"Hey," Billy says, looking down at Steve, feeling way more unsteady that he had only moments ago. "That's not -- jesus, that's not why I came here."

Billy tugs a little, encouraging Steve to stand back up. Even footing -- it's what Billy wants right now. Not Steve on his knees in front of Billy, as appetizing as that is.

Steve's fingers flex out, but he doesn't pull from Billy's grip like he thinks he should. He gets his feet back under himself, instead of staying on his knees and getting Billy's cock in his mouth like he thinks he should.

"It's fine," he finds himself saying, insisting, even as he sees Billy's jaw wind tight. "It's fine, Billy."

"Okay," Billy says, carefully.

He suddenly knows he *has* to be careful, that he can't just deal with this flippantly like he normally does. Like he wants to. And laying down some truth seems like it could help, even as hesitant as Billy ever is to share anything about himself.

So, he takes a breath and says, "I haven't slept in a bed since Saturday, so. I'm not -- that isn't what I want. Right now." He swallows. "That's not why I came here," he repeats.

Something twists, right below Steve's rib cage, and he sucks in a sharp breath. His fingers curl in tight, and something in his throat goes tighter-- and he wishes he'd never started this. He wishes he'd never opened this door.

"Why did you come here, then?" Steve asks, voice a hush, too strangled by his own dread, by the slow sink in his chest, overflowing and drowning him.

"Because you were avoiding me," Billy manages, between teeth that

want to snarl even though he won't quite let them. "Because I *did something wrong* . I thought we were fine, but clearly we *aren't* ."

Because Max hit him because she was worried and then *Billy* got worried.

"It's fine," Steve shakes his head, throat working. "We're *fine* ."

Billy's teeth click together with how fast he clenches them. His fingers tighten around Steve's wrists. "Would you -- stop *lying* to me?"

Steve hisses, but he doesn't pull away. Doesn't even *try* .

The grip is close to bruising. Steve can feel the bones protest. And it feels good, the faint and threatening pain of it, like an anchor. Like a reminder of what he's set himself up for. Of what he's allowed to have.

"I'm not --" Steve says, and his voice is a mess, wavering and tight. "I'm not lying. It's fine. We're fine. I can-- I'm fine."

He leans in, as if to try and kiss Billy, to distract him, *I'm fine* burning over his tongue again and again.

The hiss has Billy dropping his hands, letting Steve's wrists go like he's been scalded. He's not that guy. He doesn't *want* to hurt Steve. He hasn't ever wanted to hurt Steve -- even that fucking dreadful night at the Byers. It had just been bad timing, them both ending up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Steve had gotten the brunt of Billy's anger -- and Billy's regretted that ever since.

Billy ducks away from the kiss, too, pushing his way out from between Steve and the counter. It feels like a foreign move, like nothing he's ever done before. Billy Hargrove has never refused a kiss from someone he wants. He's certainly not the type to turn down a blowjob, either. He feels like a stranger in his own skin as he does up his fly.

But every ounce of Billy says that Steve is lying to him -- and *that's* not fine. No matter how much Billy wants it, it's not fine.

And he can't lie and tell himself he just wants Steve's body. Because

Billy *cares* . He cares about how Steve is feeling, what he's thinking, how he's doing. He wants Steve to be happy and safe and fucking protected.

"Okay," Billy says. "You say it's fine? It's fine. But I still didn't come here for that."

Steve chokes on a sound. He has to brace himself on the edge of the counter with a hand, and he slaps his other over his own mouth to stifle anything else.

He feels like he's on the edge of some terrible abyss. Like one wrong move, one wrong word, could pitch him over the edge and he'd end up a gross, sobbing mess just begging Billy to let him fix it, to prove it, to do *anything* to show that he can do this and that *it's fine* .

He knows it's a lie, though. He knows Billy knows it's a lie, too.

Taking one deep breath, and then another, Steve closes his eyes and tries to drag himself back. He feels like he's lost in the tunnels of the Upside Down, that Billy is the safety he's so desperately hunting for, but he *knows* how this dreams end.

"Then what are you still doing here?" Steve asks, pressing both his palms flat to the cool marble of the countertop, and he knows how awful, how distant he sounds, because he feels barely tethered to his own body. "You know why I was avoiding you, now. You got what you came for. So, if you're not here for anything else, I don't have anything to offer you."

Billy feels his stomach drop, every inch of him filling up with something that feels a hell of a lot like grief. Like hurt. And pain.

This isn't what he wanted.

But then again, what Billy wanted, what he *wants,* isn't something he can have. So, maybe this is all he *can* have. All he's allowed.

"Okay," Billy says, and takes a step back from Steve, from that brutal, cold tone. It's freezing, and Billy hates the cold. "Look, I *came* to make sure you were fine. Because I was fucking worried."

He grits his teeth, clenches his fists. He doesn’t care that Steve has nothing to *offer* him. All Billy wants is Steve himself.

“But I can take a hint. I’ll get out of your hair.”

“That's not -- You *know* that's not what I meant.” Steve says, and he twists to face him-- but he can't hold his gaze long, has to squeeze his eyes shut and scrub a hand over his face just to keep from crying from frustration, from the raw ache in his chest. “I'm not telling you to leave. I'm *asking* what reason can I give-- what can I *do* to make you *stay* ?”

“I don’t want you to give me anything, I don’t want you to do anything,” Billy says simply.

Steve’s words, the *then what are you still doing here* , repeat in his head. Like hell Steve hadn’t been telling him to get out. Billy knows that tone and he knows it well.

All he wants is to stay, but it seems, in Steve’s mind, Billy’s already got one foot out the door. And how is he supposed to compete with that?

“I’ll stay if you want me to. But *do* you want me to?”

Steve huffs out a short laugh, hands dropping to his sides, and he meets Billy's gaze and holds it. “Yes.”

Always, Steve doesn't say. *More than anything* .

Billy takes a breath, then nods. “Alright,” he says.

He takes one step back into the room, cementing his decision.

“Maybe you should check on your sauce. Wouldn’t want it to burn.”

“I turned the burner off,” Steve says, watching him. “And even if I didn't, it doesn't matter. I don't care.”

He pauses and takes a breath. He feels something needling under his skin, and he knows what it is. Knows what he needs.

He's just stupid enough, desperate enough, to ask for it.

“It's not important,” he says, eyes locked with Billy's; *you are* , he thinks, and holds out a hand. “Come here? Please?”

Hesitantly, Billy steps toward Steve, crossing the space between them. He thinks about not taking Steve’s hand, about just standing there, waiting for whatever Steve wants to do. But he thinks better of it, after remembering the coldness that had been in Steve’s tone only moments before. So, Billy slips his hand into Steve’s.

“Yeah?” Billy says, eyebrows raised.

Steve curls his fingers, carefully, slowly, over Billy's -- and he tugs, gently, until Billy comes closer.

When Steve can finally feel the heat of him, when he's close enough to kiss, Steve takes Billy's hand and puts it at his waist. Then, he slides his arms around to Billy's back, and he presses his forehead to Billy's shoulder, draping around him in a loose embrace.

“Can I have this?” he asks. “Just -- just for a second, can I have this?”

Billy feels like he’s standing right on the edge of something tall, toes hanging over the ledge. But he can’t bear to take a step back -- because this, *this* is what he wants. Just Steve, close to him, like this.

His fingers tighten around Steve’s waist, his other hand sliding over Steve’s ribs.

“Yeah,” he breathes out, heart pounding as Steve leans his forehead against Billy’s body. “You can have this.”

It hurts, having something he’s wanted for so long. But Billy can’t bring himself to step back, can’t bring himself to deny Steve this.

Steve exhales, shuddering, and he goes boneless. Easy. He feels something unwind in him, something that had been strung too tight for too long, and he can’t help but wind his arms a little more tight around Billy’s waist.

“I’m sorry,” Billy murmurs, fingers drifting down Steve’s spine to

settle at the small of his back, where the heat of him pools.

After a moment, Billy pulls back, only to tuck his nose into Steve's hair, to be more enveloped in his scent.

"I'm sorry," he says again, for all the things he *can't give* .

Steve's fingers curl into Billy's shirt. He presses his forehead to the crook of his neck. Billy shivers.

"It's okay," Steve says, and he means it, as much as it's a lie, too. "It's okay. I'm sorry, too."

Billy takes a long breath, then another. Just standing in silence with Steve, in their careful embrace. Until he feels a little bit more even, a little bit more stable and secure.

Then, Billy tilts his head, just a bit, giving Steve more space at his neck. "C'mon. I stopped smelling like you days ago. You gonna fix it?"

Steve's arms go tight and then loosen almost completely around him. He shudders again, and his throat works.

"I want to," Steve says, face still hidden there, at his neck. "I want to, but-- you're not mine. I can't pretend-- I can't pretend, when I *want* you to be mine, Billy."

God, Billy knows he shouldn't. But the impulse is too much to bear, too heavy, too tantalizing.

"Just -- for a bit," Billy asks, and the words are brittle on his tongue. "Can't you pretend, just for a bit?"

He knows he's not asking for Steve to pretend. He's asking to actually *have it* , to give himself over to Steve, just for a little while.

Steve *trembles* with his want. With how terribly he wishes it could be *true* .

But he nods, a hand fisting into Billy's shirt-- the other sliding up, up, up to curve over Billy's nape. His thumb comes forward, presses

gentle just under Billy's ear, and Steve sucks in a shaking breath as he turns his face against Billy neck, dragging his cheek there.

Then, careful and gentle and so sweet, he presses his mouth there too. Kisses the line of his throat, follows that path up with his lips, and kisses his pulse. Lingers there, arms tight around Billy, and just *breathes* .

Billy nearly shakes apart with it. Steve is so gentle, his touch so caring. Billy's not one to feel fragile -- and yet, here he is, feeling like he's about to crumble into pieces, just from Steve's lips on his neck.

He goes loose in Steve's arms, though his fingers tighten in the fabric of Steve's polo. The longer he stays, the more he knows he'll smell like Steve. And he wants it, wants to wear him like this everywhere, indulgent and stupid as it is. It's *comforting* . Especially after the last couple rocky days. Billy needs it, even if it's just pretend, just for a little bit.

Steve doesn't stop. Not even when Billy goes soft against him. He just holds him closer, presses in closer himself, and lays kiss after kiss after kiss to the line of his throat. Retraces them with his lips, until he feels raw from it. Until he's shaking with it.

His fingers curl a little tighter at Billy's nape. He pulls Billy impossibly tighter against him. He presses his mouth, lips parted and breath shuddering out of him, at the crook of Billy's neck.

"I wish you were mine," Steve says, whispers it against Billy's skin, and he doesn't know if it's even audible, and he doesn't care. " *I wish you were mine* ."

Billy can't help it. He *whimpers* . It's the feel of Steve's lips against his skin, the weight of the words in Billy's ear -- soft, but so solemn.

A shiver shakes down Billy's spine, snaking all the way down to his toes. And he yearns, suddenly and painfully, for *more* . It's stupid. It's dangerous. It's way too much to ask, and it's not the right time at all.

But the words tumble out of Billy's mouth anyway, drunk on need, on the emptiness inside of him:

“C’mon, Steve. Bite me. *Please* .”

Steve jerks slightly, seizing as his breath catches, and he doesn't pull back but his eyes squeeze shut and he lets out a soft, mournful sound.

“Don't,” he says. “Don't ask me to -- not if you don't mean it.”

Billy’s fingers tighten in Steve’s shirt. His eyes close. He can’t take this back, he knows he can’t.

And he doesn’t *want* to, either.

“Do it. Please. I want you to.”

For all intents and purposes, Billy submitted to Steve a while ago. He just needed to see himself through Jonathan Byers’ eyes to truly understand it.

“Billy,” Steve warns, but then he's pressing another kiss to the tender skin beneath his lips --

And then he's pressing his teeth there. Biting in, delicate and gentle, and then *harder* . Wanting it to bruise. *Needing* his mark on Billy.

When Steve’s teeth hit his skin, Billy’s heartbeat kicks up, ready for a challenge, a fight -- instinct, kicking in. When Steve bites down harder, it drains straight out of Billy. Instantly.

Billy groans when the pain hits. His knees want to buckle, so his arms snake around Steve. Holding himself up. Greedy to be close. Greedy for more.

It feels so *good* . Billy’s head is foggy with it; he feels delirious, dizzy.

Steve moans. The sound is muffled there, between his teeth and against Billy's skin, and he muscles Billy firmer against him, fingers sinking up into his hair and soothing over his scalp.

When he's satisfied, when something in him that's been restless and stirring finally settles, he eases back. Carefully licks over the red indentations of his teeth, and it feels warm, pulsing, under the flat of his tongue.

“Jesus, Billy.” Steve rasps, voice breaking, and his shoulders shake a little as his eyes burn -- and he cradles Billy close, keeps him there as he presses a scatter of kisses over the mark, because that's all that he can do. “It's not fair. You're not fair.”

Did Steve feel high after Billy bit him? He must have, Billy thinks. He tries to open his eyes, but his vision swims and blurs, his fingers fisting open and closed in Steve’s shirt. Scrabbling for purchase, for a lifeline.

“Fuck,” Billy finally says, and he sounds ruined to his own ears, voice rough and wasted. “Thank you,” he mumbles. He wants to keep this feeling forever.

Steve breathes deep for a moment. Drags his fingers through Billy's hair and keeps his mouth pressed to the heat of his mark on Billy's skin for as long as he can, as Billy finds his feet again.

When he feels Billy shift against him, steady himself, Steve pulls back and bites back a curse -- knowing his eyes are wet, knowing his emotions are as plain as day on his face.

Still, he takes Billy's face between his hands and sniffles as he checks him over. “You okay?” he asks.

Billy’s pupils are blown wide. His blue eyes are nearly pitch black.

“Jesus, I’ve never --” he groans, trying not to wobble on his feet, trying not to lean into Steve’s hands on his face -- and failing kind of miserably. All he wants to do is lean into Steve’s touch, to fold himself up in it for hours. “Is it always like that?”

Steve huffs out a little laugh, smile wobbly. “With you? Yeah.”

Billy takes a long, slow breath. He lets his fists loosen, just a bit.

“Okay,” he says. “Okay, I'm good.”

He's only partially sure he's telling the truth.

“We should sit you down,” Steve says, thumbs dragging over the high bones on Billy's cheeks. “Let you get your head on straight.”

Billy just nods and lets Steve pull him out of the kitchen and toward the couch. Reality is creeping in around the edges, but he still feels a little boneless, a little weak. He's never once willingly offered his submission to anyone before, never bared his neck for someone's bite. It's been taken, in fights, but the feelings are vastly incomparable. So different.

He wedges himself in next to Steve on the couch and spares a passing glance back toward the kitchen. “Your dinner,” he says, and then pauses. “What time is it?” He has to pick up Max. Has to show his face at his house.

Has to show his face *and his neck* at his house.

Billy's stomach rolls with anxiety, posture stiffening next to Steve.

Steve glances at his watch. “It's not even four thirty. Kids won't be done going through their quarters until half past five. Like usual.”

Carefully, like he's not sure it's allowed, Steve slides his arm around Billy. Runs his hand over his side, trying to ease the tension out of him.

“You okay?” he asks, brow pinching at the sudden tightness in Billy's shoulders. “Did I -- did I do it wrong?”

“No,” Billy manages, trying to breathe through the panic of needing to go home and face reality. He doesn't wanna think about that, yet. Doesn't want it to sour this moment more than it already has. “I'm good.”

After a second, Billy turns to Steve, earnest.

“You did it right.” He's already got the bruise, the bite. And he's not going to let Neil take that from him. Neil *can't* take that from him. “Do it again?”

Steve blinks at him. Blinks at him and brings tender fingertips up to Billy's neck, touching the ruddied skin there.

His throat goes tight, and he has to clear it to get past the sensation. He gives Billy one of those wobbly smiles again.

“I thought we were just pretending for a moment,” he says, but it's a question -- one he needs answered.

Billy's too out of it, too entrenched in this, to deny Steve.

“I want you to,” Billy says. “I *need* you to. Fuck pretending right now.”

Steve makes a small sound at the back of his throat, a rumble of a noise, very close to a growl. His eyes drop to his bite.

“I can't keep --” He exhales sharply, and meets Billy's eyes. “Billy, you… you told me, once, that if I asked you, you'd be gentle with me.”

Leaning in, Steve presses a kiss to the corner of Billy's mouth. To his cheek. His hand slides back around to Billy's nape, and he squeezes.

“I need -- I need you to be gentle with me,” Steve says, and he kisses along Billy's jaw, and nips under his ear. “I can't keep doing this, if you aren't. If we keep going back and forth like this... I'll break.”

Jesus, Billy doesn't know what to do with that.

But he can at least give Steve the truth.

“I don't know if I can,” he says, but it's soft. Gentle, like Steve wants. Like Billy *wants* . “I'm not gentle.”

Billy stays very still. Feels Steve’s breath against his skin, his lips against Billy's pulse.

“I want to be, but I'm not. And I -- I don't want to break you.”

“Then don't,” Steve says, his other hand fisting in Billy's shirt. “Let's stop pretending. Please? Can we -- can we stop pretending?”

“It's not that simple,” Billy says, his voice breaking, along with his heart. “That's gonna -- jesus, Steve, that could hurt you more.”

But it's not a *no* .

“I don't care. It's not important.” Steve repeats his words from the kitchen, and he presses his face to Billy's neck. “You're important. And I'm sick of pretending you're not.”

Billy is sick of it, too. Of saying no, of pretending he doesn't give a shit.

“Okay,” he says. “No more pretending.”

Steve shudders and goes heavy with his relief. “No more pretending.”

And then he places his teeth against his mark and *bites* .

12. the world was on fire (and no one could save me but you)

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNINGS: aftermath of child abuse (no actual abuse depicted, but the bruises are there); filthy talk while rutting; gosh, I love frottage; sweet, sweet boys, so sweet, so pure; that fucking bat full of nails in Steve's trunk; SWEET, SWEET, PURE ROUGH BOYS BEING SOFT BOYS
>
> Pssstt... only two more chapters after this. Granted... they are VERY LONG. But still.

Steve feels drunk. Drunk on relief and on pleasure.

He can't stop touching Billy. Their shirts have long since been shed, pulled a bit roughly, a bit desperately over their heads so that they can get their hands on one another.

Steve's got a lapful of Billy, one hand gripping his thigh and the other fisted in his hair, his face buried against his neck as they rock, as they *rut* , panting and frantic against one another. The skin under his lips is warm, and he knows-- *he knows* -- the mark on Billy's neck matches his own. Knows that it'll bruise, just like his, marking them both as *each other's* .

It makes him moan. Makes him buck up, fingers digging into Billy's thigh.

Billy's a hopeless case at this point. His head is spinning with sensation, with an overload of desire and need.

There's no point in trying to stop, now. They're well past the point of no return. And desperately, greedily, Billy finds that he doesn't want to give it up. He could keep denying himself this, keep denying himself *Steve* -- but he knows where that'd end: somewhere painful, without Steve.

He's willing to face the consequences. He's ready to.

It's easier to think about with Steve's lips on him, with Steve's hands all over him.

"Fuck," Billy pants out.

He can't stop touching Steve, hands dragging over skin like he's worshiping him, memorizing him.

"You're perfect," Billy says, grunting, as he rolls his hips down to meet Steve's.

Steve lets out a whine of a sound, dragging the flat of his tongue up over Billy's throat before grazing his teeth at the place under Billy's ear. "Stop saying that. I'm not."

"God," Billy says, like it's a curse. He shudders when Steve's teeth graze his skin, drunk on how much he likes it, on how much he wants *more* . "Pretty sure you are. I've got eyes, Harrington."

"Should probably get your vision checked, then." Steve mutters, but he's grinning against Billy's pulse, pulling him down as he rocks up.

Billy's nails drag against Steve's back for purchase. He feels strangely weightless like this, piled into Steve's lap with teeth and lips against his neck, worrying at a bruise freely given.

Billy finds that he *likes it* , the dizzying sensation of Steve pulling him down, rocking them together like Billy's riding him. Months ago, he wouldn't have let this happen, wouldn't have felt comfortable. Now -- now, he can barely think with how much he wants it.

"Steve," Billy groans out, one of his hands going for Steve's hair, fisting into it as he ruts down.

Steve moans, head tilting back as Billy's fingers curl just shy of too tight. His hips give another little jerk upward, and when he meets Billy's eyes, his pupils are blown wide as he pants, lips red and a little wet.

His other hand drops to Billy's hip, and he drags him down again,

friction electric up his spine. Until he can taste it in his mouth. Feel it on the tip of his tongue. Like there's a storm building up between them.

"God, you're gorgeous." Steve mumbles, before he can stop himself or think better of it, rocking up as he guides Billy down. " *God* , I wanna fuck you."

Billy flat out moans, a shiver washing over him from head to toe. He gets his hand in Steve's hair and pulls, pulls until Steve tilts his head back and Billy can kiss him, rough and needy.

"Fuck," Billy pants, words losing themselves against Steve's lips. "Yeah, I -- fuck, I want that."

Billy wants it so badly. He can imagine it now and the thought is heady and intoxicating. He never thought he'd want something like that -- but here he is, nearly coming in his goddamn pants at the thought of Steve Harrington fucking him.

"Want you to," Billy says, as Steve pulls his hips down, harder, rougher than before. "Fuck, *please* ," Billy pants.

Steve whines, hips stuttering up. " *Billy* ," he warns, fingers digging in and then flexing out.

He wants to. He does. But he's already so goddamn close.

"I will," he says. "I will, I promise. Gonna-- I'll fill you up, like you did me. Til you come for me."

It's Steve's words that do it, the promise behind them, that has Billy breaking apart. His hips shudder as they roll down to meet Steve's one last time before his orgasm hits. All of the frantic energy that's been building up -- it explodes over him, nerves singing. Billy pants out Steve's name, fist tightening in Steve's hair, other hand clawing down his back.

Steve hisses, arching up under him. He pulls Billy's hips against his own, teeth bared as Billy shudders and comes apart in his lap.

It's the most beautiful goddamn thing he's ever seen.

“Fuck,” Steve whispers, rutting up harder, aching in his jeans, pain twining blissfully with pleasure. “ *Fuck* , Billy.”

Billy, oversensitive as he is, grinds down against Steve with a curse stuck between his teeth. He catches Steve in a kiss -- brutal, biting, needy -- absolutely loses himself in it.

“ *Need* you to,” Billy moans against Steve’s mouth, skin still alight with pleasure, everything over-sensitive and overwrought. “God, *Steve* -- want you so bad.”

Steve's head snaps back against the couch, face twisting up, lips parting. His hips stutter, jerk up, and then he's coming -- spilling out in a rush at the *thought*-- panting heavy as they rock each other through it.

“God. God, Billy, I--” he doesn't know what he wants to say, doesn't have the words, so he reaches up and takes Billy's face between his hands, kissing him slow and steady and tender.

Billy melts underneath Steve’s hands, going easy, going gentle. He feels safe, secure -- even though he can’t help but acknowledge the anxiety rolling right underneath the surface.

Billy kisses back like his life depends on it, like the action makes up for all the words he can’t say, all the things he can’t articulate.

When they finally break apart, break for air, Steve touches his forehead to Billy's and breathes deep. He brushes his fingers along Billy's cheeks, and smiles -- bright, delighted, elated.

“You're perfect,” Steve says, confesses, and he means it. “You're amazing, Billy Hargrove.”

“You’re not so bad yourself, Steve Harrington.”

Billy shifts, a breath of air catching in his throat as he pulls back from Steve. Buzzed. Loose. He feels *good* , like all the *shit* that they burdened themselves down with earlier is on the backburner. Relegated to the side to be dealt with later.

All that matters is now, the pleasure he feels, the *happiness* he has in

this space, so close to Steve.

“I think -- I’m going to have to steal a pair of your underwear,” Billy says, pressing a lazy kiss to Steve’s neck.

A laugh bubbles it's way up out of Steve's mouth. “I think I can arrange that.”

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Going home is never easy.

Billy regrets it instantly.

The good news, Billy thinks, looking at himself in the morning the next day, is that the bruising on his neck is not super noticeable.

The bad news is that there’s nothing he can do about his face, which is what is taking all the attention away from his neck. If anything, the bruising on his neck just blends in with the whole, painting an even clearer picture of what happened to him the previous night.

He got into another fight, Billy tells himself. Just another fight for big bad Billy Hargrove, the new kid from California with the attitude problem. It’s not out of the realm -- if anything, it’s par for the course. Well, the bruising on his neck isn’t -- but even Billy has to lose out sometimes. Someone just put him in his place, is all.

A knock on his door startles him away from the mirror and his depressing reflection. Not that looking will do much, though surveying the damage is oddly satisfying, in a sick sort of way.

“Do you --” Max starts, and then stops, when Billy turns around to glare.

“What?” he snaps, before she can continue.

He watches as she clenches her jaw and looks at his face -- and then, purposefully, *doesn’t* look at his face. “I was going to ask if you wanted any makeup.”

“Why would I want makeup?”

“To cover up, idiot,” she snaps back, tone matching Billy’s short one.

Billy looks at Max, really *looks* at her -- and he doesn’t find judgement, doesn’t find any scorn. He sees sympathy and maybe a little pity -- but mostly, he sees the careful camaraderie they’ve been building up over the past few months. He sees it, thin and fragile, and so ready to snap.

So, he doesn’t explode like he wants to out of frustration, exhaustion, or pride. Instead, he turns back to the mirror and looks at himself again. Then, he glances at Max through the mirror, meeting her eyes. It’s a little easier, that way.

“I don’t think it’d help, much,” Billy says.

Max takes a step into Billy’s room. She doesn’t come in here much, if ever. She takes another few steps when he doesn’t say anything. Soon, she’s standing at his shoulder, peering into the mirror at his face.

“Oh,” she says softly.

He sees what she sees. One split lip. A black eye that’s not quite done forming, but already looks as brutally painful as it feels. There’s a chunk missing from Billy’s eyebrow, too, courtesy of Neil’s class ring -- and he thinks that one’s probably going to scar. There are other scattered bruises and scrapes, too, but those are the brunt of it.

There’s the bruising on his neck, too -- but Neil had stayed away from that, too disgusted to put his fists anywhere near Billy’s shame.

There’s other bruising that’s not visible, hidden under his clothes, and those are for Billy to bear the weight of. It’s his face that he really cares about. The face that people will notice.

“I don’t think makeup can really help with those,” Max says. “It can’t cover up cuts.”

“Yeah,” Billy says, eyes lingering on his lip, his eyebrow.

When he looks back up at Max, she’s frowning.

“Stay here,” she says.

“You’ll be late,” Billy warns here. “We should’ve left five minutes ago.” Neil isn’t home, though, so neither of them had been particularly rushed.

Max disappears and comes back a minute later with some antiseptic ointment. It smells harsh, but it doesn’t sting when he lets her put it on his face. He draws the line when she pulls out a band-aid, even though it’s flesh-colored.

“No,” he says. And then, softer: “thank you.”

“Okay,” Max tells him, with a careful touch to his arm. “We should probably go.”

In the car on the way to school, they’re silent. Billy doesn’t even turn the music on.

They’re two minutes out, when Max turns to him and says: “I forgot to eat breakfast. Can we get pancakes?”

“You’ll miss first period,” Billy tells her, after a beat.

“That’s fine. I’m hungry,” she says.

Billy pulls a U-turn and drives them toward his favorite diner, no more questions asked.

“Pancakes it is. I could do with some coffee. Maybe I’ll even let you have some, Maxine.”

He doesn’t mention her empty cereal bowl he saw earlier in the kitchen sink.

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Excited isn’t the right word for what Steve feels. It’s not quite that same, thrumming hum under his skin. It’s too closely tied with a cold sweat, the dull rush of anxiety, that makes his hands shake and his stomach twist up.

He thinks, perhaps, *eager* might be a better word for it.

He remembers coming down, with Billy, soft and steady and *sure* after biting him the night before. After finally laying his own claim on Billy's skin, to match Billy's own on his, and feeling awash with relief. High off of it and *reeling* -- from the fact that Billy had *let him* and that it was *real* . That they didn't have to pretend what they were doing doesn't mean something anymore.

It's that same feeling that sings through him through the night, after kissing Billy *goodbye* and knowing he would get to kiss him *hello* . It's that same feeling that has him picking out a soft, blue cashmere sweater, the neck a low vee he would usually pair with a polo or a button-up, but that shows the hollow of his throat and the bite still healing on his neck with an unabashed kind of pride. It's that same feeling that has him practically jittering right out of his own skin as he picks up a curious and amused Dustin, as he drops him off, as he climbs out of his car at the high school and hunts for the Camaro in the lot.

It's not there, not even when Jonathan pulls up in his old beater next to Steve, and Nancy climbs out, eyes on his neck. Jonathan follows, chewing on the corner of his mouth, but Steve can tell even in his distraction that he's trying not to grin, bemusedly, at Steve.

Nancy sidles up to him and huffs, lips pursed tight. "You're an idiot, Steve Harrington."

Steve blinks down at her, gripping the straps of his backpack. "What did I do?"

She pointedly looks at his neck, and then meets his eyes again.

"I think you're gonna give her whiplash," Jonathan mutters, leaning toward Steve like he's passing him a secret, and Nancy shoves at Jonathan's shoulder.

"So, what? You're fine now?" Nancy asks. "Back to showing it off instead of killing yourself with self-loathing?"

Steve shrugs and shifts on his feet. "We talked."

“You talked.”

“Yes,” Steve nods, a bit firm, standing a bit straighter.

“And?”

“And it didn’t go well. At first.” Steve says. “And then it did.”

Nancy’s face colors.

Steve finds himself blushing in reply. “Not-- I don’t mean like that. Well, I mean, I guess I *do* mean like that, but--”

“You bit him,” Jonathan says, eyes narrowed on Steve’s face. “He let you bite him, too.”

Steve feels something bright and proud unfurl in his chest. He nods.

“He met me where I am,” Steve says, shrugging and tucking his hands into his pockets, so that his friends can’t see the way his fingers tremble at the memory. “And we’re… well, I don’t know what we are. But we are.”

He’s not sure what to call Billy. His friend, definitely. But his boyfriend? His mate?

But then he thinks the word *lover* and the word *alpha* and the word *his* , and warmth suffuses through him.

Nancy’s face softens considerably. She reaches out and touches her hand to Steve’s arm.

“I’m happy for you,” Nancy says. “Just… be careful? Seeing you like you were yesterday…”

“Don’t worry, Nance.” Steve smiles. “Everything’s worked out. It’ll be fine.”

He doesn’t know how wrong he is.

Not until later. Not until Nancy and Jonathan usher him inside, Billy’s Camaro still not in the lot. Not until first period goes by, then

second. Then third and fourth.

It's not until lunch that he finally sees Billy. He hates to say that, as the day had passed, he'd grown more and more anxious to see him. To touch him, in the flesh, and know that it was all real. That it wasn't just some fever dream, hopeless and hopeful for something *more* .

But seeing him is somehow worse.

Billy's at his locker when Steve walks up. People are giving him a wide berth, more so than usual, and Steve doesn't know why. Not until he walks up, nerves electric and humming under his skin, and he calls out-- and Billy turns.

Steve doesn't even see his own mark, can't focus on anything but the swelling of Billy's eye and mouth. But the yellow and purple on his skin.

He falters, nearly topples right over, right knee going a bit weak and eyes going wide. There's something hard in his throat, that makes it hard to swallow, to speak, to breathe-- but he gasps out Billy's name and goes terribly, horribly still.

Doesn't know what to do. Not in the face of this.

"What--?" Steve shakes his head and takes a wobbling step closer. "Billy, *what* --?"

And Billy -- Billy just leans against the locker like nothing's wrong, like his face isn't black and blue and sore as hell.

"Pretty boy. Long time no see."

There's exhaustion in the lines of his body, pain in the way he holds his shoulders, his neck. But he's relaxed and easy, like he's not bothered by the fact that someone went to town on his face. Maybe he's not.

Steve, though, *is* bothered by it. He takes another jilted step forward and reaches out -- then thinks better of it, hand jerking down.

“What happened?” he asks, voice rough and low. “Who --? Billy, who *did* this?”

Billy swallows. Steve watches the line of his throat.

“You can touch,” Billy says, soft. “It's -- it's alright.”

Billy doesn't, however, say anything about who messed up his face like that, or why.

Steve shuffles that much closer, and brings both his hands up to cradle Billy's face as delicately as he can. Fingertips ginger. Like one wrong touch, no matter how tender, will break Billy to pieces.

“Billy, what *happened* ?” Steve asks, voice cracking.

“Got into a little fight,” Billy says, cracking a lopsided smile. It looks like it hurts, with the way he winces a little.

But he *does* look happy as he leans into Steve's touch. Like he never would have weeks ago. Like he wouldn't have, yesterday.

“Don't worry about it, pretty boy. I'm good,” Billy says. “As cute as you fretting is.”

“With *who* ?” Steve asks, barely touching his thumb you the edge of swelling near Billy's eye, careful not to hurt him but feeling the heat under his skin-- and something acute, like rage and shame, all balled up and twisted into one pulsing vacuous thing, churns in him. “Who the fuck did this?”

And his fingers suddenly itch for his bat. For the violent *crack* of it meeting flesh.

Billy shrugs, too nonchalant. Like he's putting it on, dredging it from somewhere. Like the past is in the past, so what’s the point in getting angry about it.

“Does it matter?” Billy asks.

“Yes, it matters. It matters because they *hurt you* ,” Steve says, and his face breaks a little, eyes darting down to Billy's neck -- to his bite,

plain as day. “It matters because *you* matter, and-- and because I'm pretty sure it's my *fault* .”

Steve swallows. Past the guilt, past the anger, because Billy warned him. Warned him this could happen and now it *has.*

“You didn't look like this when you left,” Steve says. “So, someone did it *after* . After we -- fuck, this is *my fault* .”

Billy's eyes narrow a little, but he doesn't look angry, just tired. Already finished with arguing. “It's fine, Steve. I'm fine.”

Billy runs his hand down Steve's arm, like he's concerned with Steve maybe running away, doing something violent.

“It's not your fault,” Billy says.

Steve shakes his head, dropping his hands, and it feels like maybe he should take a step back, put some distance between them so no one has any idea -- a need he's never really felt before.

“But it is. You *told me* and I didn't listen and now you're --” Steve's throat goes too tight, and he remembers Billy telling him people *die* over this, and looking at Billy's face, now, he believes it. “Fuck. *Fuck* , I should've listened. I shouldn't’ve pushed --”

“ *Steve* ,” Billy says, and then he frowns.

Before Steve can stop him, Billy grabs his hand and starts walking. Tugging him down the hallway, around a corner, and then out the door. They make it to Steve’s car before Billy says anything else.

“C’mon, open it up. So we can talk.”

Steve fumbles a bit, with one hand, and he thinks in his hazy panic that maybe he should pull his hand free of Billy’s. That they shouldn’t let anyone *see* . That Billy’s been hurt enough, already, and Steve doesn’t want to be the cause of any more.

But Billy doesn’t let him go. Keeps his fingers locked firm over Steve’s hand, even after he’s got the Beemer unlocked, and Steve stands dumb and numb and stupid as Billy opens up the back door

and ushers him in. He doesn’t let go once he’s followed him inside, either, and shuts the door behind him-- locking them in the secluded space of his backseat.

“I’m sorry,” Steve blurts, instantly and quickly, fingers tightening over Billy’s. “I’m so fucking sorry, Billy.”

“Hey,” Billy says, leaning in to kiss Steve gently on the lips. Anyone could see, and yet Billy doesn't seem to care. “Hey,” he says again, gentle, like he's trying to soothe Steve. Like he's a spooked animal. “Hey, it's okay. I'm okay.”

He kisses Steve again, gentle. Affectionate. Slow, but full of heat and meaning.

“Don't be sorry. I'm not sorry.”

And how can he not be sorry, when it must hurt to kiss Steve, with that split lip of his. But he kisses Steve anyway.

“But you're hurt,” Steve breathes, clinging to Billy's hand now. “You're hurt, and it -- it's because of what you said. You told me, and I didn't listen, and now you're *hurt* .”

“I’ll heal,” Billy says.

He runs his thumb over Steve's knuckles, soft. Comforting. Billy hums and lets the pad of his thumb trade over the bones of Steve's fingers, then the tendons. Like he's memorizing everything underneath the surface of Steve's skin.

“Please,” Billy says, bringing Steve's hand to his lips. He kisses Steve's knuckles and his lips are so soft. “Please don't regret this.”

Steve shudders out a breath, mouth falling slightly open with it, and he squeezes at Billy's fingers.

“I -- I don't.” Steve says, then swallows. “But I don't want you hurt because of me, Billy.”

And the words feel heavy in his tongue. Heavy between them.

Because he doesn't just mean he doesn't want Billy hurt. He means he'll do whatever it takes, even if that means breaking his own heart, to make sure it doesn't happen again.

“Steve,” Billy says. “It's okay.”

But he sounds hesitant, unsure, as he looks at Steve. His words sound true, and there's no doubt that he believes them -- but it's obvious that he's tentative. And likely, that's because of Steve, of his tone and his expression. Like Billy is unsure of where *Steve* stands now.

“Max tried to put a bandaid on my face this morning,” he says, like he's trying to distract him. Lighten the mood.

Steve huffs out a tight breath, and his eyes dart up to the gash across Billy’s brow. “You should’ve let her. Are you hurt anywhere else?”

Billy opens his mouth, and then snaps it closed -- like he thinks better of whatever he was about to say. A lie, maybe.

“My ribs are pretty bruised,” he says with a shrug.

Steve’s gaze drops to Billy’s chest. His jaw flexes, back molars grinding, and he takes a breath a nods. Pulls his hand from Billy’s. Reaches out and tugs at Billy’s shirt with his fingertips.

“Lemme see,” he says.

Billy nods. Steve watches as he takes a breath, his chest expanding under his shirt as his lungs fill. He lets Steve gently push his shirt up.

His torso is a mess of bruises, black and blue and yellow -- and clearly fresh. Not quite done bruising. It looks painful, and yet, when Steve meets Billy's eyes, he seems only to be concentrating on Steve, not on the pain.

Steve wants to ask. Wants to stare Billy down and ask *who* . He knows Billy would tell him. Knows he would unveil it the same vulnerable way he let Steve pull up his shirt.

He doesn't.

Instead, carefully, he places a hand where Billy is unbattered. Then, he leans in, leans down, and places a very gentle kiss to the first of Billy's bruises, mouth tender, and heart aching.

“I'm sorry,” he mutters, and then brushes his lips across another, barely enough pressure to even truly be there. “I'm sorry, Billy.”

“It's not your fault,” Billy says, and Steve hears the unspoken *it's mine.*

But Billy doesn't seem to mind. He's not wound up, like he was yesterday. Like he's accepted this reality.

“Don't apologize for something that's not your fault,” Billy says, gentle.

Steve straightens back out. He pulls Billy's shirt back down, carefully smooths the material, and then draws his hands back to himself.

“Did you get hurt because of the bite?” Steve asks.

Billy takes a breath, even.

“Yes. I'm -- not going to lie to you and say I didn't.” Billy takes Steve's hand again, holding it tight. “But it probably would've happened anyway.”

Steve's fingers twitch in Billy's. “What do you mean?”

For a second, it looks like Billy might bolt. But then he settles, holding onto Steve's hand like a lifeline.

“My dad,” Billy says. “He doesn't need a reason. I mean, he'll take one. But he doesn't need one.”

Something in Steve freezes. Goes cold, cold, *cold* -- so cold that it burns.

His palms and the very tips of his fingers *itch* . His teeth clench together so tight that his temples give a dull, aching throb. He clutches at Billy’s hand because it’s the only thing he knows how to do right now-- and it’s the only thing keeping him from climbing into the front seat of the Beemer and hunting Billy’s dad down, right then,

and right there.

“I don’t--” Steve takes a breath, wets his lips, and gives a little shake of his head, eyes closing at the yawning *horror* that opens its maws in his gut. “Your dad beats you.”

It’s not a question. He doesn’t need it answered.

Billy shifts in the seat next to him. Looks away when Steve finally looks back up.

“And your dad beat you,” Steve says, voice rough and low and strained to his own ears, “because I bit you.”

“My dad beat me -- *beats* me -- because I'm broken,” Billy says. “He doesn't need a bite mark to tell him that.”

He still won't look back at Steve.

“Billy,” Steve says, and his name shakes out of Steve’s mouth, but Steve waits-- waits until Billy’s gaze flicks back up to his, and Steve takes Billy’s hand into both of his own. “You are *not* broken.”

He practically spits the words. Says them with such conviction that he’s shocked it doesn’t shatter them both.

“You’re not broken,” he repeats, on a breath, and ducks his head to keep Billy’s eyes locked with his own when he tries to look away again. “And even-- even if you *were* , there is no-- that is not a *fucking* reason to hit your son. That isn’t--”

Steve’s throat works. His words choke him, and he huffs out a short, sharp breath.

“You’re not broken,” Steve says. “You’re perfect. You’re perfect-- and, yeah, okay, kind of an asshole sometimes, and you’re probably a little more aggressive than necessary-- but you’re… you’re so fucking sweet, and stupidly funny but only when you aren’t trying, and you love the ocean, and have shitty taste in music, and you’re secretly really smart and really good at reading people, and you eat pizza like you’re trying to kill something-- and *you’re not broken* .”

For a moment, Billy looks at Steve like he's crazy.

It's a fond look, something kind of foreign to find on Billy's face, especially as bruised and as broken as it is. But it's nice. It lends a softness to the harsh angles.

“It's okay,” Billy says, like he's trying to comfort Steve, like Steve is the one who needs comfort here. “I know there's something wrong with me, Steve. I know this is the way the world works.”

And Billy looks so damn *sincere* , so resigned.

“Billy --” Steve breaks off, shakes his head, and reaches out to guide Billy's face close to his own, touching their foreheads together. “Am I broken? If you're -- if you think you're broken, because of this, because of *us* , then that means I'm broken, too, right?”

He doesn't wait for Billy's answer. Kisses the corner of his mouth that isn't hurt, and cradles Billy's hands between his own.

“If you're broken, I'm broken.” Steve says. “But broken, not broken, I don't care. To me, you're perfect. And your dad? Your dad is an asshole and he's fucking lucky that I have something I need to do after sixth period.”

Billy seems like he calms a little bit. But he's still wound tight, still resigned to this distorted reality he has accepted.

“I've always been like this, Steve. This is -- just who I am.”

But, other than that, he doesn't fight Steve. Doesn't correct him.

“You can't do anything about it. You *can't,”* Billy says. “Promise me you won't?”

Steve almost does.

But then he pulls back and looks at the cuts and bruises scattered over Billy's face -- and he knows it would be a lie.

“I can't,” Steve shakes his head, lips pressing thin. “I can't promise you that, Billy. I'm sorry.”

For the first time today, Billy starts to look panicked. It's an unmistakable look in his eye: fear. Unadulterated and heightened by the scrapes and the pain.

“You can't,” Billy says, grabbing at Steve's face with desperate fingers. “You can't, Steve. Jesus, he'd *kill* me. Don't you get that?”

And Billy is clearly afraid, like he has absolutely no doubt about what would happen. Like maybe, it's come close before.

Carefully, Steve takes Billy's wrists in hand. He squeezes, and presses forward into his touch.

“If he hurts you again, I will do everything in my power to *stop him.”* Steve says. “You can't -- you can't ask me to promise you that. Not when I could keep you *safe* . Not when he *hurts you* .”

“He could hurt you too, Steve. It's not out of the realm that he wouldn't.”

Billy leans forward and presses a kiss to Steve's lips. Chaste, but fervent.

“I want you to be safe,” Billy says. “I'd take a thousand punches if it meant you wouldn't get hurt.”

“Billy,” Steve huffs out something like a laugh, but it's too strained. “There's a reason I carry a bat full of nails in my trunk -- and it's not because I'm afraid of monsters like your father.”

Billy pauses for a second. He looks at Steve, eyes wide, then narrowed.

“You -- carry a bat full of nails in your trunk?”

Steve's brow furrows. “Yeah. I… thought you knew that? The kids were always raving about how Max nearly took your balls off with it. I thought you knew that was… mine.”

Billy clearly did not know that, given the expression on his face.

“No,” Billy says cautiously. “I didn't know that was yours. Why,” Billy

asks, “do you have a bat full of nails in your trunk?”

Steve's teeth click together, and he shrinks back a bit. He clears his throat and glances away.

“Because,” Steve says. “Because there *are* things I *am* afraid of.”

Billy laughs and it's a short, breathy thing.

“Pretty sure if you went at anyone with a bat full of nails you'd have a hell of a lot more problems. Jesus, you're too pretty for jail, Harrington.”

“I'm not going after any *people* with it,” Steve rolls his eyes. “Except your dad, if he ever lays a hand on you again.”

“It's going to happen again,” Billy says, “and you're not going to do anything about it. I'll be out of that house soon.” Like there’s no room for argument.

Billy pauses for a second, then makes a face.

“Are you scared of the boogeyman, Steve Harrington?” Billy says, and there's a hint of fondness in there, a gentleness that wasn't there before. Another joke.

“Stop trying to change the subject,” Steve says, but he squirms a bit back, like just talking about it is dangerous, and his palms feel clammy as he thinks of that towering, terrible demogorgon.

“The subject is already changed, because there's nothing else to say. You're going to leave it alone. *Please* , Steve.”

And Billy is back to looking scared -- but on top of that, he looks determined and unmovable.

“Billy, you can't -- you can't make me *promise* something like that.” Steve says, and maybe it's the talk of boogeymen, or maybe it's the bruises on Billy's face, or maybe it's the immovability in Billy's expression, but Steve's chest constricts dangerously and his throat goes tight. “You can't ask me to *let you* get *hurt* .”

Billy's jaw works, clenching tight.

“You can't *do* anything. I promise you. It'll just end up back where it started and then you could get hurt, too.”

“Again, *crazy bat full of nails* .” Steve says, frantic and rushed, gesturing through the rear window. “In my *trunk* . And I'm friends with the Chief of Police. And my dad has money -- like, *so much* money. And Jonathan and Nancy know how to make Molotov cocktails. And I know a girl who could break your neck with her pinky finger -- and I'm not talking about your sister.”

Steve's out of breath when he's done. Panting a little. Flush in the face.

And, honestly, this whole thing would be *ridiculous* if it weren't for the fact that Billy's dad *beats him* .

“I'm not saying I'm going to do something,” Steve finally acquiesces. “I'm just saying you can't make me promise *I won't* . I care about you too much, Billy. Do you understand that? And even if I didn't, even if we weren't -- whatever we are… I would *still* have a problem with it. Okay?”

Billy is quiet for a moment. His eyes dart over Steve's face, like he's searching his features for something. A lie, maybe.

But he won't find one.

“I think you might be a little crazy, Steve Harrington,” Billy says. He leans forward and kisses the corner of Steve's mouth. “First and foremost, because you care about me. I mean, that's just fucking insane, pretty boy.”

Steve lets out a shuddering breath and slumps forward against him. “Well, I've been told I'm an idiot more than once.”

“Yeah,” Billy breathes out, and gathers Steve up in his arms. “You're one crazy fucking idiot with a bat full of nails in your trunk.”

Billy tucks his nose against Steve's neck and just breathes in. It must hurt, putting pressure on his face like that, but he does it anyway.

Like the comfort Steve can offer outweighs any of the pain.

It makes something weighty and heavy press on his chest. Makes him breathe slower. He threads his fingers into the curls of Billy's hair and takes a deep breath.

“I'm sorry you got hurt,” Steve says. “Because of me. I'm sorry.”

“It wasn't because of you,” Billy says. Steve can feel the words against his skin, the careful press of Billy’s lips in such a vulnerable space. “Told you. Would've happened anyway. Happens all the time. I'm okay -- okay?”

His words are muffled and tired, but spoken like a promise, a plea. Billy's hands fist in the back of Steve's shirt, just holding on.

Steve shivers. Shudders and curls his fingers into Billy's shirt.

“I'm sorry anyways.” Steve says. “I hate that -- I hate seeing you hurt.”

“I wouldn't want to see you hurt, either,” Billy says.

Billy pulls back and kisses Steve again, slow and gentle. Affirming.

“Sorry. I probably made you miss all of your last class,” Billy says.

“I don't care,” Steve mutters, half chasing his lips. “You're worth it.”

“See, and this is why people think you're an idiot,” Billy laughs, and kisses Steve again. “But I'll take it,” he says. “Fucking nail bat and all.”

13. what a wicked thing to do

Notes for the Chapter:

> I apologize in advanced for how damn long this one is.
>
> WARNINGS: semi-public sexcapades; Billy goddamn Hargrove; Steve the romantic bastard, giving his shit away like he's proposing (the watch is a Rolex, pearl faced, and very very expensive); feelings and emotions; El being a nosy little shit; unrealistic 1980s happy gay ending because fuck you reality; Billy, please stop trying to use your fists to solve your problems.

The next few days pass without incident, bleeding into the next week. And then the week after that.

Billy stays out of Neil's path and Neil generally goes about ignoring Billy, just like he normally does after a particularly brutal encounter. It's only a month or so before Billy's old enough to cut his losses from the Hargrove household and break out on his own, even if he doesn't have much of a safety-net, money-wise.

Max has been clipping job postings out of the paper for him, though, which helps.

Billy's got a pocket full of them when he wanders into school. The whole thing makes him smile, just like the fading bruise on his neck -- comforting, in an abstract sort of way.

Now that his face is healing a bit, people have stopped ignoring him.

Maybe that's why Tommy and Carol are waiting by his locker for him. Steve's there, too, looking a little uncomfortable about the new addition to their usual morning.

"Hey Hargrove, how's it hanging?" Tommy says.

"What's this, the morning welcoming committee?" Billy says, to

Tommy and Carol. Then, he looks at Steve and offers up a genuine smile. “Hey there, pretty boy.”

“Hey,” Steve says, seems to relax at the sight of him, something tight leaving his shoulders and his expression.

Billy takes his time opening his locker, just letting Tommy and Carol watch him. He deposits his bag and grabs the books he needs, then shuts the locker.

“So,” Billy says, in Tommy and Carol’s direction. “Can I help you guys with anything?”

Tommy grins, slow and wide. It’s an expression Billy knows -- he’s seen it on his own face, in the mirror, a million times.

“Yeah,” Tommy says, eyeing bite mark on Billy’s neck. “I was wondering if you could clue me in about *that* .”

When Billy looks, Steve is glancing a bit furtive between Billy, Tommy, and the bite he'd left on Billy's neck. He seems to shrink in on himself when he meets Billy's eyes -- like he's bracing for something.

“Oh, this?” Billy says, like it’s at all a surprise that Tommy even noticed it. What’s more surprising, honestly, is that no one’s asked about it so far.

A month ago, Billy was terrified of a conversation like this. But now, he’s already faced the consequences of his actions, already seen his father’s ire at the stark evidence that his son *is* broken. And he’s faced the reality of what life would be like without Steve: miserable. It’s not to say that he’s not still scared of future consequences, the clear eventualities of this -- but they’re not mysterious. They’re not unknown. And Steve -- Steve is something Billy’s willing to fight for, someone he’s willing to get hurt for.

Billy’s eyes flick to Steve, unsure. They haven’t talked about this, haven’t discussed *coming out* at school. To friends, to acquaintances.

“Pretty sure my boyfriend gave this to me,” Billy says.

Steve's eyes go wide, his lips parting, and his gaze practically burns over Billy's face; hunting. He must find something he likes because he grins, bright and pleased and broad.

Tommy sneers. “You let some omega mark you up?”

Billy makes a face, then laughs. He feels light with the look on Steve’s face, the acceptance. The unrepentant grin.

“Hey, Steve -- you an omega? Why didn’t you tell me? I could’ve *sworn* you were an alpha.”

Carol makes a surprised noise, like she’s both shocked and unsure if Billy’s kidding or not.

That just makes Billy laugh even more. Especially when Tommy goes red in the face, looking between them like they know some kind of secret, and it must be Billy's laughter--or maybe the way Steve is holding himself, arms crossed over his chest, grin crooked and pleased, leaned against the lockers-- because then Tommy is grinning and huffing out a short laugh too. Then another, like he's in on some joke that isn't being told.

“I can see why you'd make the mistake,” Tommy says, and his eyes are mean, his tone bitter the way it always is around Steve. “Steve's always been a bit of a bitch. Haven't you, Stevie?”

Steve's easy smile falters, shoulders drawing up.

Billy could, if he wanted to, pass the whole thing off as a joke. Say he got bitten on the neck because of the fight he was in. Tommy wouldn’t know any better, wouldn’t be any the wiser.

But Billy doesn’t *want* to.

What Billy *wants* to do is to take Tommy’s sneering, sniveling face, and smash it straight against the locker. Because no one talks to Steve like that, because no one *looks* at Steve like that.

So, that’s exactly what Billy does.

He grabs Tommy by the back of the neck and shoves him hard, until

his face slams against the cold metal of the locker. His blood is boiling, his heartbeat racing. All he's seeing is red. All he hears is the sick crunch of Tommy's nose meeting unyielding metal.

Steve startles, shoving off the locker, arms falling to his sides and fingers twitching. "Billy --"

"Apologize," Billy hisses.

"Oh, my god!" Carol leaps back, hands covering her mouth, eyes wide-- and there's blood pouring out of Tommy's nose, onto the pale yellow of his shirt with the stupid popped collar.

"What the *fuck* , Hargrove!" Tommy grunts, flops against the locker, like a fish gaping, and there's more than one set of eyes on them now, people slowing in the hall to watch. "The fuck is your *fucking* problem? You can give Harrington shit but I can't?"

There's something that comes alive in Billy when he sees the blood pouring out of Tommy's nose. It stokes the fire inside him, burning bright and hot and fervent.

"Harrington and I talked it out," Billy says, simply. "So no, you can't give him shit. Now," Billy says, tightening his hand on the back of Tommy's neck a little bit more. "Apologize to my fucking boyfriend."

" *Fuck* you," Tommy flails, sounding stuffier by the second, eyes narrowing on where Steve is hovering. "And fuck *you* . Always knew you were a pussy, Steve, but this takes the fuckin' cake. Bet you suck his dick real nice so he'll fight your battles for you--"

"Tommy," Carol says, in something like a whisper. "Shut *up* ."

It's a smart idea, Billy thinks, because if Tommy doesn't stop talking, Billy's going to rearrange his entire goddamn face.

Billy takes that moment to pull Tommy back and then slam his face into the locker again. It must hurt, because Tommy makes a sick sort of whimper, a choking noise.

Billy laughs, loud and brash.

“Billy,” Steve says, laying a hand on his shoulder-- and it looks like the entire hallway is expecting Billy to turn that anger on Steve the second he touches him.

Instead, Billy gentles a little. He keeps his grip on Tommy, of course, but he feels some of his hard edges go soft.

He turns to Steve. “Yeah?”

“That's enough,” Steve says. “It's fine.”

Tommy sputters.

“What the *fuck* is wrong with you guys?” He warbles, slumping a bit, but Billy doesn't think he's concussed. “Didn't know you were a fuckin’ freak like Byers, Hargrove. Knew Steve was on a slippery fuckin’ slope, but I never thought it'd be this bad.”

Steve takes a slow breath, eyes closing, and he keeps his hand on Billy-- as if to hold him back -- or maybe to ground himself.

“Stevie, man.” Tommy croaks, and Steve makes a face, chin breaking a little bit. “Do you let him fuck you like a bitch, too?”

Steve *said* it was fine. But there's no way in hell that Billy's gonna let that kind of comment stand. Not about a friend, and certainly not about a boyfriend -- if that's what Steve is to him. They haven't talked about it, but it's certainly there, lurking underneath the current.

Billy growls and surges forward, pulling at Tommy until he's hoisting the other boy up against the lockers, pinning him with his hands fisted in his shirt.

“The *fuck* did you just say?” Billy hisses.

Tommy chokes. There's blood down his face and on his chin, but he's laughing like he might start sobbing, glaring over Billy's shoulder at Steve.

“Fuck you, Stevie.” Tommy says, spits blood, let's his head thud back against the lockers. “You're both assholes.”

“Billy, let him up.” Steve says, fists his hand into the back of Billy's shirt, and tugs. “You're not getting in trouble for this. Let him up.”

Billy feels like a dog with a bone, unwilling to give up his juicy prize. He hates Tommy, can't escape how much he wants to *hurt him* -- even though he knows it's probably mostly displaced.

“Apologize for being a dick,” Billy says, through gritted teeth. “He was once your friend, right?” he says, at Tommy. “So what the *fuck?”*

“Tell your fuckin’ girlfriend to apolgize to me, *first* .” Tommy thrashes, bares his teeth, clutches at Billy’s wrists with his hands.

Billy grinds his teeth together, vision all red. “ *Steve* doesn't need to apologize for anything. This,” Billy says, eyeing Tommy's fucked up nose, “this is all me, baby.”

Carol is the first one to pipe up. “Say you're sorry, Tommy.”

Tommy’s eyes go wide, flitting over to her where she's hovering and glancing between them all, face scrunched up, looking about half a second from crying.

“Carol,” Tommy’s mouth opens and shuts. “What --?”

“I'm *tired* of this,” Carol says, throwing her hands out. “Of this stupid-- *whatever* between you and Steve. He called us assholes *once* , when we *were being assholes* . And now you're always trying to start a fight whenever Steve's around. I'm *sick* of it.”

Tommy’s throat works against Billy's palm. “But he's --”

“Just say you're sorry,” Carol says, half begs, and Steve pulls at Billy's shirt again.

Billy should let Tommy go, should heed the way Steve is pulling at him, but he can't. Not yet. Not until Tommy apologizes.

So Billy stays quiet and waits.

“I'm -- sorry,” Tommy says, finally, and Billy can feel the words in his fingertips. “I'm sorry, Steve.”

Billy drops him instantly and he hits the floor like a sack of potatoes.

“Remember this. And stay the hell away from my boyfriend. Let’s go,” Billy says, eyes now on Steve. He knows he's let this go on for too long. Every minute they linger longer, the more Billy risks getting caught.

Steve lingers, eyes on Carol as she sighs and crouches down next to Tommy. Eyes on her as she cradles Tommy’s jaw between her hands and calls him *stupid* under her breath.

When Billy pulls, tries to coax him away, Steve falters.

“Carol,” he says, and she looks up sharply. “I'm sorry. I'm sorry, too.”

Her smile is tight, but she nods and turns her focus back on Tommy. Steve looks like he's half tempted to get down on the floor with her and help Tommy to the nurse, but he doesn't. When Billy pulls again, Steve stumbles a little and then follows.

They make it to an empty classroom. Billy ducks inside and Steve follows him, pulled along by Billy's current.

It isn't until he catches the look on Steve's face that he stops, that the whirlwind inside him falters, slows.

“Sorry,” Billy says, even though he's not -- not completely, anyway.

Steve's throat works, and he stares at Billy for a moment, brows still pinched and mouth caught in a purse. He doesn't look *afraid* , but there's something cautious there.

“You didn't have to do that, Billy.” Steve eventually says, eyes going to the toes of his sneakers. “Out yourself, stand up for my *honor* or whatever… you don't have to do that kind of thing for me.”

“I'm sorry if you -- if you didn't want to come out like that. I know we hadn't talked about it, but I -- Jesus, Steve, I wasn't going to just let him talk about you like that.” Billy takes a deep breath, and then a step closer to Steve. “I *want* to stand up for you, for this, for us. Sometimes I can't, or it's a fight I won't win, but I *want* to.”

It means that much to him.

“I just --” Steve's face scrunches up, arms crossing, shoulders hunching. “I don't want you to get in trouble. For me. Or hurt again, because of me. And I'm not mad about -- I'm so *happy* that you're not -- that you're not ashamed of this, but -- you can't fight everyone who looks at me wrong. And Tommy is my problem. Has been since before you rolled up here. And I'm not guiltless when it comes to him and Carol.”

Billy just shrugs his shoulders. “If he’s your problem, then he’s my problem.” But judging by the firm set of Steve’s body, the look in his eyes, he’s not budging on his opinion, so he takes another step forward and drops his voice. “Remember how you wanted to take your fucking *bat full of nails* to my dad for getting me good in the face? Well, he’s not your problem either, Steve.”

Steve lets out a tight, distressed sound, hands coming up to scrub over his face. He groans against his palms and then looks up at Billy.

“But Tommy’s *my fault* ,” Steve says, tries to argue. “I'm the one that was a dick, and it's-- it's *different* . Tommy doesn't *beat* me-- he's just an asshole. I can *handle* that.”

But Steve *doesn't* handle it. Hasn't. Just lets Tommy give him shit like he thinks he deserves it.

“If you think I’m going to let that sniveling *alpha wannabe* get away with calling my boyfriend a bitch, you’re wrong,” Billy says. And then, “I mean, is that -- *boyfriend* -- is that fine?”

Steve scoffs out a laugh, and it sounds a bit wobbly. “Yeah. Yeah, Billy, boyfriend is great.”

“I’m sorry,” Billy says again, and this time means it a little bit more. “I don’t mean to fight your battles for you, I just -- he’s a fucking dick, Steve. He’s a dick, and I’m not going to let him get away with that. I need people to know that they can’t talk shit about you. About us.”

Steve shudders out a breath, but he's nodding, arms still crossed,

looking a little small standing there. “I know. I know, and that's -- I mean, I don't imagine anyone's gonna try and give you any shit for submitting to me after a display like that. But… but you can't punch your way through stuff all the time-- and Billy, I'm flattered, I am, that you're just as willing to stand up for me as I am for you, but… Tommy isn't totally off base. I'm an asshole, and he's allowed to be mad at me.”

Billy crosses his own arms, mirroring Steve’s posture. “Being an asshole once doesn’t make you an asshole, Harrington. I know you,” and he feels like he does, now, after the months of dancing around this. “And you’re *not* an asshole.”

Steve makes a face again, like he doesn't quite believe that. His eyes stray down again, to his toes.

“Well, I feel like one.” Steve confesses. “You weren't here, but… I mean, they were my best friends and I threw them away like *garbage* . I was a dick about it, a real piece of shit, and I-- I still *am --”*

“You’re not. And if they were your real friends, they’d get over it,” Billy says. “Look, I mean, you’re still friends with Nancy and Jonathan. And they fucking --”

Well, the whole school knows what happened there.

“You know,” Billy finishes with a shrug.

“That Nancy cheated on me and then left me for Jonathan?” Steve says, dry and a little tired, head bobbing. “Yeah, I know.”

“That’s an asshole move, right?” Billy says. “But you’re not out there being a fucking dick about it like Tommy was to you. You worked it out. You’re still friends.”

“Yeah,” Steve looks back up again, lips pressed thin, and then he sighs and yields a bit. “Yeah, okay. I guess I can see your point.”

Billy reaches out, then, and wraps his fingers around Steve’s upper arm. “You deserve good people in your life, Steve. People who care about you.”

And Steve has got that. In Nancy, in Jonathan. In the army of kids who always seem to be nipping at his heels. And he's got Billy, too -- not that Billy fancies himself a *good person* . But he definitely cares about Steve, and he's willing to fight anyone who so much as looks at Steve wrong.

The touch seems to break Steve completely. He slumps, arms unfolding, and he reaches out for Billy, fisting his hands into his shirt and shuffling forward, closing that last bit of distance between them. He presses his face to Billy's shoulder, huffs out a breath, and lets Billy take some of his weight for a second.

"People like you, right?" he asks, words a bit muffled.

Billy laughs a little bit, his shoulders shaking with it as he wraps his arms around Steve's body. "I'm not good," he says. "But yeah. I give a shit about you, Harrington. And I'll hurt anyone who gets in your way."

It's strange, feeling this protective of someone, this vehement that no one hurts them.

It's a foreign feeling -- but Billy kind of loves it.

"Because I'm your boyfriend," Steve says, like he's clarifying something. "Because I'm yours, and you're mine. Because I'm-- because I'm your mate, right?"

Billy swallows. His heartbeat pounds in his ears.

He never really *thought* about it like that. *Mates* are for alpha and omega pairs -- he never considered he'd get to have something like that. He'd written it off entirely a long time ago.

"Yeah," he says, finally, tightening his arms around Steve because he feels a little dizzy, a little lightheaded. "You're my mate if I'm yours."

Steve turns his head, presses his face to Billy's neck, and breathes there for a moment. Kisses the bite he'd left, the edges of it fading on Billy's skin with the rest of his bruises.

Billy can feel him shudder.

“Mine,” Steve says, kissing the mark again, pressing the words to his skin like a promise. “For as long as you’ll have me.”

Billy feels himself warm, feels his chest tighten and flush with affection. “Okay,” he says, feeling the reality of this settle into his bones. “Okay. We’ll make this work.”

And for once, for the first time in a long time, he feels *hopeful* . Optimistic that maybe they can do this. That they can have this.

Steve drags his face away from Billy’s neck, blinks at him when he pulls back enough to meet his eyes. His smile is small, a bit tentative, and he leans in and kisses Billy’s cheek, arms sliding around him.

“And to think I was just stopping by your locker to tell you good morning,” Steve breathes, kissing the corner of his mouth. “And now we’re gonna be the talk of the school for *years* .”

“Good,” Billy says, catching Steve in a real kiss, something he’d been looking forward to all morning. He had wanted to kiss Steve at his locker, in front of everyone. But he’ll take this. He’ll take putting Tommy in his place for everyone else to see.

Billy brings his hand up to cup the back of Steve’s head, to thread his fingers into Steve’s hair.

“Let them fucking talk,” Billy says, against Steve’s lips.

Steve moans, soft and breathy against his mouth. He eases against him, melts into him, and licks at his lower lip. He shuffles in closer, until their knees knock, until their balance becomes treacherous and hums when Billy’s tongue slides against his.

Billy loses himself in Steve for a little while, until the ringing of the bell catches him off-guard.

“Fuck,” Billy breathes, and kisses Steve again, a little softer, before pulling back. “I have to get to physics.”

Steve groans. Hangs his head and lets it fall heavy against Billy’s shoulder again.

“I have a quiz in history that I really don’t want to go to.”

“You have to take your quiz, Harrington,” Billy says.

He runs a palm down Steve’s spine and feels Steve shudder with it, feels him quake under Billy’s touch.

“Would rather blow you instead,” Steve mumbles, and he’s *pouting* , hands on Billy’s hips, not pulling away despite the rush of students outside in the halls.

“Oh my god,” Billy breathes out, his chest going tight. His pants, a little, too.

He wants to. He wants to give in *so bad* . But they’re in a classroom in the middle of school in the middle of the day. It’s one thing to call Steve his boyfriend, to come out as the only queer couple Hawkins has -- it’s another to be caught with Steve blowing him at school.

“After school,” Billy says, kissing the pout on Steve’s lips. “In the backseat of your car?”

“I would,” Steve breathes. “But I have errands to run after school.”

“I could tag along,” Billy says, inviting himself along. “And we could pull off to the side of the road for some fun, when you’re done. Or,” Billy presses a kiss to Steve’s jaw, then to his neck, breathing him in deep. “Or halfway through.”

Steve jerks a bit against him. Then shudders in one of those heavy, wanting ways he does.

“Jesus, Billy.” Steve slides a hand up, curves it over the back of Billy’s neck, and tilts his head over for him. “Yeah. Yeah, at the very least you can come shopping with me. I’ll have to-- there’s a second part I’ll have to check with Hopper about, but. Yeah.”

Billy doesn’t care. Hell, he’d wait on the side of the road for Steve for an hour if it meant he got to spend the time with him. There’s secrets there that Billy knows aren’t his to learn, aren’t his to demand answers to -- and that’s fine. Right now, he has what he wants. Something, some *one* he never thought he’d get to have.

“It’s a date,” Billy says.

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The day stretches on long, longer than usual, and Steve’s not sure if it’s because every corner he turns has someone looking at him, whispering, and then looking away-- or if it’s the anticipation in his belly. The absolute giddy elation he feels, and the fact that he can’t spend it smiling like a complete dumbass at Billy Hargrove’s dumb face.

At his *mate’s* dumb face.

“You’ve got it bad,” Nancy says to him, at the end of the day, eyeing Steve as he smiles stupidly into his own open locker. “Were you like this when we were dating?”

“Absolutely,” Steve says, and glances over at her pursed lips, and he’s already heard her lecture on *proper displays of aggression* , coupled with her *stupid ways alphas court potential mates* rant when she’d approached him at lunch and pinched his side hard -- *so you’re dating Billy Hargrove, now?* -- and plopped down next to him.

It was wild, the amount of people who were suddenly so interested in Steve’s love life. But Steve spent most of the day *hearing* about his and Billy’s “new” relationship more than he actually got to enjoy the actual relationship. Billy’d spent lunch getting dressed down by the assistant principal for *outrageously aggressive alpha behavior* before getting a slap on the wrist and being sent on his way, catching Steve right before the end of lunch period and kissing him stupid like he just couldn’t help himself before rushing off to class again.

Steve hadn’t seen him since, but he knows Billy’s tagging along to go shopping with him.

“It’s cute,” Nancy says, face softening some. “And it’s nice to know he’s willing to break someone’s face for you.”

Steve groans. “Please, stop reminding me.”

It’s then that Billy finds him. The only clue Steve gets is Nancy’s eyes flicking quickly to someone behind him before there are arms circling

around his waist, lips at his ear, his neck.

“Hey, pretty boy,” Billy says, voice low and a little rough. He looks up for a moment, eyes likely meeting Nancy’s. “Hey, Wheeler. Long time, no slap.”

Steve can’t see Billy grinning, but he can hear it in his voice, can feel it against his skin when Billy presses another kiss near his ear.

No resentment. No bite. For Billy, it’s positively friendly.

Hell, Billy Hargrove *is* the kind of person who would appreciate being slapped, especially since it was for all the right reasons.

“Hargrove,” Nancy says, lips pursing back up again, but she doesn’t look like she’s mad-- more like the expression she makes when she’s trying not to be amused. “You haven’t given me a reason to slap you, yet, today.”

Steve rolls his eyes. But he doesn’t pull away from Billy, not even when he feels laughter rumble up along his spine through Billy’s chest.

“Better keep it that way,” Billy says, slouching just a little bit so that he’s leaning mostly on Steve’s shoulder, chin hooked over it. “Did you have a good day?” Billy asks, in Steve’s ear.

“I passed my history quiz,” Steve shrugs his other shoulder, shuddering in his hold, hands coming up to curl over Billy’s wrists. “And I don’t have any homework tonight. And I’m pretty sure everyone was staring at me all day. But, you know, not awful.”

“Good thing you actually went to class,” Billy hums.

Nancy coughs. “I’m right here.”

“So you are,” Billy says. “And where’s your other half?”

Nancy huffs. “He’s developing photos for the yearbook.”

“And you’re out here?” Billy asks. “Not taking advantage of having the dark room all alone at the end of the day?” Billy laughs, then

tucks his mouth against Steve's ear to whisper, loud enough for her to hear: "You *sure* you two used to date?"

Nancy rolls her eyes, even as Steve elbows Billy a little.

"You're going out to the cabin, tonight, right?" Nancy asks, digging around in her bag for a moment.

"Yeah," Steve nods, ear hot, and he blinks as Nancy holds out a book. "For El?"

"Mike read it to her, I guess?" Nancy frowns down at it. "But there's pictures. He wanted her to see them."

"Cool," Steve says, taking it from her. "I'll make sure she gets it."

"Thanks, Steve." Nancy beams, eyes darting to Billy, and she rocks up onto her toes to kiss Steve's cheek before pulling away. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Bye, Nance."

Billy tugs Steve around and pulls him into a real kiss when Nancy walks away, smiling against Steve's lips.

"Seriously," Billy says, against Steve's lips. "How did you two date when *you're* the one who wanted to bang in a classroom in the middle of the day?"

"Shut up, oh my god." Steve huffs, face burning, but he's smiling like an idiot again, he knows, as Billy kisses him long and slow, right there in the middle of the hallway.

He's surprised there aren't jeers. Or maybe a few derogatory words. But he thinks maybe everyone is too shocked-- or maybe everyone knows better. Billy's got sharp teeth; Steve knows this first hand.

Billy's also more than a little trigger happy. Likely, news of his dance with Tommy this morning made it into the farthest corners of the school before even ten AM.

"Make me," Billy says, though he has to break the kiss to do so. "I

can think of a better use for my mouth, pretty boy. Something that'll keep me *real* occupied."

"Oh, yeah?" Steve asks, and he's still smiling-- his cheeks are starting to hurt, honestly-- but he fists a hand into Billy's shirt and tugs him closer, letting himself shuffle back and relax against the lockers, Billy's arms still around him, giddy that he can *do this* -- something he's wanted to do for a long while, now. "I can think of a few things, too."

"Well," Billy says, wrapping a hand around Steve's wrist. "What are we still doing here, then?"

Billy guides Steve out of school, arm slung around his waist, fingers tucked into Steve's back pocket. Steve realizes that some of what Billy's doing must be bravado -- putting on a show, rubbing it in everyone's faces, *daring* them to do something about it -- but he genuinely seems to like it, to have his hands all over Steve.

"My car, or yours?" Billy asks, when they make it to the parking lot.

"Yours, if that's alright." Steve says, tucking into his side. "Gotta stop at the police station first, then the store. And then… well, we'll see if I'll have to ditch you or not when we finish up with Hop."

He looks at Billy, then. Hopes he won't be mad about this. That he won't feel like Steve is lying or avoiding telling him something-- and while that's partially the case, it's not his secret to tell. While he knows Billy is aware of El-- at least in passing, and probably from the kids-- he doesn't know if Hopper will be okay with Steve bringing a stranger out to his cabin in the woods.

Billy narrows his eyes -- but he doesn't make a fuss. He just opens his passenger door and holds it open for Steve and shuts it behind him. All chivalrous.

"The Chief doesn't like me all that much," Billy says, as he makes his way to the station. "I'll have you know."

"Had a run-in or two with Hop?" Steve asks, reaching over to the radio and wrinkling his nose up at the heavy drone of guitar that

pours out of it, laughing when Billy slaps his hand away to keep him from ejecting the cassette or changing the station.

“Don’t touch the tunes, Harrington. I don’t trust your choices.” But Billy sounds fond. And once they’re going, Billy rests a warm palm on Steve’s knee. “Had a run-in or two. Maybe you haven’t heard, but I’m kind of an asshole.”

“You? *No* .” Steve says, grinning at his profile, sliding his hand over Billy’s on his leg. “What’s he gotten you for? Speeding? I bet it’s speeding. He’s a stickler about shit like that-- unless he’s the one doing it.”

“God, that’s not surprising,” Billy laughs. “But, uh. Let’s see. Speeding. Fighting. Public drunkenness.” Billy taps his fingers against the wheel like he’s checking off boxes. “I tried to charm the pants off the receptionist at the station. He didn’t take too kindly to that, either.”

“Florence? I’m surprised she didn’t read you the riot act, and then try and feed you. She’s always trying to shove baked goods down my throat, says I don’t eat enough.” Steve says, dragging his thumb along Billy’s knuckles. “But Hop’s good people. I mean, I wasn’t always on his good side, either.”

“You don’t eat enough,” Billy says. “I’m pretty sure you could stand to eat more. Give me a little something more to hold onto, you know?”

Billy runs his palm over Steve’s thigh and Steve gets the distinct impression that Billy Hargrove is *nervous* . It’s not out of the realm -- clearly Hop means a lot to Steve, and Billy doesn’t seem to have a great history with the guy.

Catching Billy’s wrist, he turns his hand over in his lap, and tangles their fingers together. Squeezes.

When Billy glances over, Steve leans in, pressing a sweet kiss to his cheek.

“I eat plenty,” Steve says. “And the worst that’ll happen is he says

no. But I don't think he will."

"The worst that happens is that he tells you to stay away from me. It's a small town, Steve. Hell, he's probably heard by now that we're together." Not that it matters that the school day's just over.

Steve snorts and thinks back on going down into the tunnels with the kids, despite his promise to keep them at the Byers'. To keep them safe.

"I don't usually listen to what Hopper tells me to do, in most cases." Steve says. "He's a good man, Billy. He's not what you think he is. He wouldn't tell me to do that. And even if he did, I wouldn't listen."

"We're not exactly *normal* ," Billy says, but he leaves it at that.

He keeps his fingers laced between Steve's and drives them the rest of the way to the station in silence. It's the quickest route -- which means Billy knows it well. Steve gets the inkling that maybe *a couple run-ins* means you need at least two hands to count them.

"You want me to stay in the car?" Billy asks, when they pull into the station parking lot.

Steve twists in his seat to face him, tugs at Billy's hand until he does too, and offers up a smile. He brings Billy's hand up, pressing his mouth to the back of it, and then lets go-- stopping to unlatch his watch around his wrist. It's a leather thing his mom bought him for Christmas, with a pristine white face, and he doesn't know how much it cost her, but he knows it was enough to balk at.

Taking Billy's hand back, he wraps the watch around his wrist and does up the clasp, leaning in and kissing the question-- the *what are you doing* -- off of his mouth before he can even ask it.

"We're not normal," Steve agrees. "We're broken. You and me. But we're broken together. I want you to come in with me, but if you want to stay here, I'm not gonna force it."

"I'll come in with you," Billy says, after a moment.

His fingers touch the face of the watch with a careful consideration, a

delicateness with which Steve has only ever really seen Billy touch Steve, nothing else. He undoes his seatbelt and nods, and then they both get out of the car. Billy stays a step behind Steve, like a bodyguard, solid and steady behind him.

Florence barely even looks up at them. “Mr. Harrington.”

“Hey, Florence,” Steve smiles. “He back there?”

“In his office,” she says, and gestures them through.

Steve glances back, at Billy, as if to make sure he’s still there, and then heads deeper into the station. When he gets to Hopper’s office, he knocks and waits until Hopper calls out for whoever it is to come on in.

Opening the door, Steve pokes his head in with a grin. Hopper eyes him over the rim of a coffee mug, and then eyes Billy behind him.

“What can I do for you, Mr. Harrington?” he asks.

“I, uh. I have a question.” Steve says, shuffling in, reaching back and taking Billy by the wrist to pull him in after before shutting the door. “An Eleven related question.”

Hopper squints at him, then sighs and gestures to the chairs in front of his desk. “Take a seat. I’m sure I wanna hear this.”

Billy hesitates, but eventually sits when Steve does. He's likely seen the inside of this office before, but he stays quiet about it. Oddly respectful, for Billy Hargrove. Maybe he really *does* care about what Hop thinks of him, of them. But he keeps his hands to himself, not making their relationship obvious. Maybe, just in case Hop hasn't heard.

For a second, Hopper just looks between them. Then, sighing, he rests forward on his elbows.

“This doesn’t have anything to do with Tommy Hinton’s mother coming in here and trying to raise hell this afternoon, does it?” he asks.

Steve shifts in his seat. “No.”

“Good,” Hopper says. “Because I already told her I’d have a conversation with whoever broke Tommy’s nose, but when I heard you were involved, I figured the kid might’ve deserved it.”

Steve hears Billy mutter a *he did* under his breath, but other than that -- which he covers in a cough -- he stays quiet. When Steve looks over at him, his jaw is clenched and his back is straight. He looks the picture of respect which is -- well, it’s not a look Steve has ever seen on Billy before.

But it makes him kind of queasy to see it. The unnatural stillness of it and the tightness around his mouth, around his eyes, and he looks back at Hopper.

“He was trying to bully me around again. Nothing groundbreaking.” Steve says. “But I’m not here about that.”

Hopper eyes Billy. “What are you here about then?”

“I’m bringing groceries out to the cabin tonight,” Steve says. “I wanted to bring Billy with me. Introduce him to El. Since he’ll be seeing her around soon, if he sticks around for her to finish up her homeschooling and transfer into the middle school with the rest of the kids.”

Hopper’s brow arches, and he leans back in his seat. “You want to bring him out to the cabin.”

“He might be driving her around, if Max has her way.” Steve shrugs. “They’re practically attached at the hip, these days. Besides, El asked me about him last time I was out there.”

Hopper grimaces. “She mentioned you had a new friend. I didn’t realize it was Billy Hargrove, here.”

“Hop,” Steve sighs. “How many times did you catch me smoking weed down by the quarry? But you’ve got me toting groceries out there for you once every two weeks.”

And he’s saying something else. Hopper knows it. Maybe Billy does

too, even if he doesn't know the context.

You used to think I was a shithead, but now you trust me . Steve says, between the words he actually speaks. *Give Billy that chance, too* .

Hopper's lips press thin, but he nods his head with a tired huff. "Yeah, fine. Not like she can't take care of herself, if it comes down to it, or that you'd bring someone that might hurt her out there. She'd kill me if I kept her from meeting *Steve's friend* ."

Steve blushes at that. Wonders what little wisps she's picked up on while snooping around the way she does.

Digging in his pocket, Hopper throws a twenty onto the desk, and Steve leans over and takes it.

"We're out of the chocolate chip kind," Hopper says. "So get extra of that, if you could."

"You got it," Steve grins, pushing to his feet. "Thanks, Hop."

"Don't mention it," Hopper says, and looks at Billy the same time that Steve does. "Kid, don't make me regret this. And stop getting into fights. Not even with someone who's picking on your boyfriend."

Steve blinks over at Hopper, who shrugs him off.

"Doesn't take a genius to smell the pheromones," Hopper looks at Steve pointedly. "Now, get outta here. I have some paperwork to do."

"Thank you," Billy says. "Sir."

It's the first time Steve has ever heard Billy say anything like it, but he doesn't get a chance to ask, because Billy is ushering them out the door and closing it behind them. The guy moves fast out of the station, like he stole something, like he can barely breathe inside its confines.

"Jesus," Billy says, when they make it back to his car, running his hands through his hair.

“Billy?” Steve asks, frowning, once they’re both in the confined safety of the Camaro. “You okay?”

“Yeah,” Billy breathes out. “I’m good. I just -- didn’t expect him to be so -- goddamn nonchalant about it.”

Steve’s face softens, and he reaches out, a bit hesitant, before pushing some of Billy’s curls behind his ear. “I told you. Hop’s good people. And believe me when I say we’re the *least* not normal thing he’s seen in the last year.”

“Okay,” Billy says, like he doesn’t believe Steve, but is humoring him anyway.

He leans forward and presses his lips to Steve’s with a gentle kiss. Billy already seems to be relaxing a little bit, no longer cooped up in the station. No longer trapped.

Steve reaches for him. Slides his fingers against his jaw and angles him in for another kiss, lingering a bit longer.

“So,” Steve breathes against his lips, grinning a little as Billy nudges at his nose. “Grocery shopping. Thrilling pastime, I know. You sure you don’t wanna ditch me and go find someone more exciting to suck your dick later?”

Billy pulls back and gives Steve an affronted look, suddenly all serious. “Shut up,” he says. “I don’t want anyone but you.”

Then, Billy leans forward and leans down -- and catches Steve’s neck between his teeth again, biting down. To remind Steve that he’s his.

Steve gasps, a wash of heat flooding through him, under his skin, until he feels like he might combust. It goes straight to his head, makes him go loose and easy, any tease bleeding right out of him and leaving something earnest and raw and open.

His hand goes to the back of Billy’s head, curling over at his nape, eyes going half-lidded and heavy. “ *Billy* ,” he breathes.

Billy nibbles at his neck for a moment, nursing at the bitemark he refuses to let fade. When he pulls back, his eyes are dark and he’s

panting.

“So,” Billy says. “Aren’t you gonna do me?”

A small, needy little sound comes up from the back of Steve’s throat. He doesn’t realize he’s made it until it’s already rolling over his tongue, and he surges forward across the gear shift to catch Billy’s mouth in a heavy, open-mouthed kiss. Licks his way past Billy’s teeth and drapes his arms over his shoulders, one hand fisting into the back of his shirt while the other curls into the mess of his hair.

He feels Billy’s hands flutter to his hips. Feels him groan into his mouth. He swallows the sound down, like he’s hungry for it, and then lurches over and slings his leg across Billy’s thighs-- until he’s practically seated in his lap, straddling his legs, kissing him until they’re both breathless.

He hears Billy make a sound, maybe something a little startled, but Steve is already pulling away, lips tender and red and a little wet. Already dipping his head down to nudge Billy’s jaw up, pulling at his hair a little, and placing his teeth sweetly over the bruise on Billy’s neck.

Billy could argue -- they’re in the parking lot of a police station -- but he doesn’t. Instead, he just goes easy, making the hottest goddamn sound Steve’s ever heard out of him, when Steve’s teeth clamp down against skin. Steve bites harder and then Billy groans, fingers tightening around Steve’s hips, fingertips creeping under clothes and digging into flesh.

“Fuck,” Billy says. “Jesus, Steve.”

Billy’s hips jolt underneath him, rocking up against Steve’s weight pressing down. It’s cramped and it’s hot, and Billy Hargrove is squirming underneath him in the driver’s seat of his Camaro, going loose and easy for Steve’s bite.

It’s one of the hottest, headiest things Steve’s ever experienced. He thinks he could do anything, right here, Billy writhing under his body and his teeth. *Wants* to do a whole lot, like ride him just like this, with Billy submitting to him like this.

Steve pulls back gasping, hips stuttering down when Billy gives a little pull, friction sparking up his spine. “Shit,” he hisses. “ *Shit* , Billy, jesus.”

There’s so much desire burning and churning around in his chest. They haven't had a chance to touch each other, not like this, in the past weeks. It scorches through his veins and he licks at his mark on Billy’s skin, mouth watering, rutting down again a bit helplessly.

Steve’s hard in his jeans, and so is Billy, and someone could walk by, could see, any second.

“We gotta--” Steve shudders, shaking a little with how much he *wants* , panting heavy against Billy’s throat, unable to resist the urge to nip at the edges of that bruise. “We gotta stop.”

Billy whines, head tilted to the side, like he’s trying to give Steve more access to his throat, to urge him to not stop. To never stop. Steve gets the distinct impression that he could bite through skin, taste blood on his teeth -- that he could bite so hard as to leave a scar -- and Billy would only urge him on.

“Fuck,” Billy says, hips rocking upward. “God, we can’t -- do this *right here* .”

But he wants to, clearly. They both do.

Steve groans. Braces a hand up on the roof of the Camaro and grinds down harder, fingers fisting into Billy’s curls, biting his way up the line of Billy’s throat.

“Wanna fuckin’--” Steve gasps as Billy bucks, fingers curling against the soft lining of the car, like he’s trying to grasp at it, and he bites into a place below Billy’s ear *hard* to make him slump down against the driver’s seat, to try and make him stop driving Steve crazy with the way his hips keep moving up to meet his. “Wanna take you, just like this. Feel your knot while I mark you.”

“God,” Billy says. “You’re gonna kill me, Steve Harrington.”

But then there are hands pushing Steve back, urging him back into the passenger’s seat.

“Sit,” Billy says, and he sounds wrecked. “Stay.”

And then he throws the Camaro into gear and skids straight out of the police station parking lot.

Steve startles a bit, but once they’re driving, his palms start to tingle. There’s something contrary shifting in him, restless and a little hungry, and while *obeying* would usually sound nice, he just wants his mouth and his hands back on Billy.

Leaning over the gear shift as Billy rolls down the road, Steve presses his face back against Billy’s neck, laughing when he jerks a bit and curses. He kisses at his bite mark, licks at it, and reaches down and palms the length of Billy’s cock through his jeans.

“Where are you taking me?” Steve asks, squeezing, and Billy jumps a bit.

The car jerks a little when Steve’s hand squeezes Billy’s cock, Billy’s hips rutting up against the pressure.

“Are you trying to kill us?” Billy hisses, but he’s the one who takes the next turn a little too sharp, tires squealing as they go. “Trying to find an alley or something,” he says, though his words are broken halfway through by a groan when Steve bites down again at his sensitive neck.

“Behind the grocery store,” Steve mutters, mouthing over his throat, rubbing him through his jeans. “I’ve necked back there a couple of times.”

Billy shudders under Steve’s touch and he makes a noise, like he doesn’t want to think about Steve necking with anyone else -- which is probably true.

They make it to the alley behind the grocery store faster than should be possible. But maybe Billy ran a couple lights -- Steve wasn’t paying attention.

The car’s in park and Billy shoves his seat back as far as it can go before Steve can even register it. And then, Billy’s tugging him back onto his lap and catching Steve in a brutal, needy kiss.

Steve groans, both hands sinking into Billy's hair. He's rutting before he can stop himself, rocking and pressing down against him, just to feel the heavy length of Billy's cock press up against him through his jeans. It feels good, so good, and maybe a little depraved, too.

Steve loves every second of it.

"Want you," he gasps, when their lips part, words coming between the desperate press of their mouths. "God, Billy, want you so bad."

Billy pushes Steve back -- and then he's reaching, rummaging in his glove box -- and he comes back with a tube of lube. Because of course Billy Hargrove has lube in his car, of course he's prepared.

"I could," Billy says, with a rough voice. "If you wanna, I could fuck you right here. With you on top of me, like this."

Steve swallows, throat clicking, and then he's nodding. Nodding and already reaching for Billy's belt, working it open, kissing and licking at Billy's jaw.

" *God* , yes." Steve says.

Steve slides Billy's cock out of his pants and gets a hand around him, and jesus -- Billy's already so hard and leaking at the tip. Billy's hands shake with need as he works Steve's pants open, as he tries to work them down enough so that this will work.

Billy gets the lube on his fingers -- too much, but he doesn't seem to care -- and reaches behind Steve.

"Gonna open you up," Billy says, as he pushes a finger against Steve's hole. It's so much easier than the first time. So familiar, the way Steve's body opens up for Billy.

Steve gasps, mouth hanging open a bit as Billy works that first slick finger into him. Works the muscles loose, slicks him up, and slides in that much deeper. It feels *good* , and Steve rocks down against his hand, hips rolling slowly as he pants against Billy's mouth, clutches at his shoulder, and pumps over the length of Billy's cock.

It's not long before Billy's got two fingers in him, Steve rocking down

and taking them easily, their foreheads pressed together, clothes bunched up between them. He whines, high and breathless, from the back of his throat, when Billy's fingers curl just right, and his head goes heavy as his vision goes hazy, bucking slightly.

"Billy," he whispers, kissing him and breathing heavy. "Billy, Billy, *god* , Billy."

Billy pushes another finger in along the first two, stretching Steve out, getting him ready. He's gentle, but firm -- unrelenting. But he knows Steve's limits, knows not to push too fast, giving him time to adjust.

"You're so tight, baby," Billy pants, licking into Steve's mouth. "You're so fucking hot."

Steve *whines* . Whines and rocks down a little harder, letting out a little cry of a sound as Billy meets him halfway.

"C'mon," Steve pants. "C'mon, *c'mon* , want you. Want you, Billy."

He doesn't have to wait long. Billy doesn't make him wait. He's desperate for it, too. Steve can tell, by the way his hands shake as he pushes Steve's hand away to slick up his cock. By the way he tugs Steve closer, pants half down his thighs, slumping down a bit so he can guide himself into Steve.

It's just as good, just as overwhelming, as the first time. Steve gasps out and braces against the roof of the car again with a hand, clenching up as Billy coaxes him down, down, *down* onto his cock. As he bottoms out and groans.

"Love this," Steve breathes, grinding down a little, shuddering and trembling as he feels the way Billy twitches inside of him. "Fuckin'-- won't ever get enough of this. Of you. *God* , Billy."

" *Steve* ," Billy whines, sounding like he's absolutely wrecked by the time he's fully seated in Steve. He rocks his hips, like he can't stop himself from twitching, can't stop himself from needing more.

But even as Billy begins to move, it's clear he's biting something back. It doesn't take long for Billy to pant, to groan, fingers grappling

at the back of Steve's shirt.

"Steve," he tries again. "I need you to -- *fuck* -- I need you to bite me. Please, god, *please* ."

And Steve-- Steve *absolutely* does not have a problem with that.

With his free hand, he fists his fingers into Billy's hair and angles his head back. Dips down and kisses over the heavy rush of Billy's pulse. Rolls his hips slow, and then *bites* . Right over the bruise, teeth sinking in just shy of *too hard* , hips working up into a steady rhythm as he rides Billy's cock and claims Billy as his own.

Billy whimpers, his body going all loose under Steve's teeth. Like he's folding to Steve, yielding to him. And yet, he's still fucking into Steve, taking him, hands hard and steady on his hips. The duality of it is dizzying -- and Steve knows Billy feels it too.

It's cramped and cozy, but Billy driving into him is brutally hot. He's unstoppable, and infinitely thorough -- hips arching to make sure his cock drives into Steve *just right* , on every thrust.

Steve gasps out, presses hard up on the roof of the car, feels like he might break it with the way he strains and shakes with each meeting of their hips. It's rough and rushed-- desperate and so, so needy-- the way their bodies work together. Steve feels like he could fly right off of his own axis any second, Billy pulling him down and driving in hard and deep and *perfect* .

Panting against his neck, he mouths over the bite. Kisses it and licks and bites, ruts down with high, breathy sounds as Billy fills him over and over. It feels like the edge of *too much* , but Steve loves it. Loves the heady rush of Billy under his teeth while he drives up into him.

Billy gasps, coiling up like a spring underneath Steve. He wedges a hand between them and wraps his fingers around Steve's cock.

"I'm so close. So fucking close. Wanna knot you. Can I?" Billy pants.

"Yes," Steve says, breathless and helpless, riding down hard, gritting his teeth and then batting Billy's hand away from his cock-- wants to cling to this impossible sensation, this pleasure that seems endless, as

he pants into Billy's ear. "C'mon, baby. Give it to me. Make me yours."

That's all the encouragement Billy needs.

It his him like a freight train, pleasure rushing over his skin as he spills himself inside Steve. His knot comes fast, swelling up at the base of his cock while he's still coming. He can feel the pleasure of the knot as it pushes against Steve's tightness and Billy groans with it, gasping out into the silence of the car.

"You're so fucking tight," Billy says. "Is this -- is this fine? Don't wanna hurt you."

Steve whines, trembling in his lap. It's just pressure, pressure, all pressure. Until Steve is panting and dizzy, twitching and spasming around him, taking his knot like he was made to do it.

" *Yes* ," Steve gasps, rocking his hips, moaning as Billy presses in all the right ways, eyes glassy and jaw loose-- and he thinks there might be tears in his eyes. "Yes, it's -- you feel *so good* --"

Steve rocks again, their bodies locked tight, Billy's come hot and thick and wet inside of him. His scent sinking beneath Steve's skin. And Steve turns his face against Billy's neck and *bites* , hard, feeling Billy twitch inside him.

Billy's hips jolt upward when Steve's teeth sink into his skin. He nearly shouts, head swimming with pleasure *again* .

Getting himself together, Billy's hand works over Steve's cock. His movements are punctuated with his own pleasure, a little rough, a little hard. He wants Steve to come, needs him to -- and greedily, Billy wants to feel Steve tighten around him, wants to hear him break apart on top of Billy's lap.

"Mine," Billy says. "You're all fucking mine."

Steve's hands drop to Billy's shoulders, clutching and clawing as pleasure scalds him. As it prickles and burns and itches along his nerves.

He ruts, into his hand and onto his knot, muscles fluttering and hot and *so tight* as he stutters in Billy's lap. He sobs against Billy's neck, seizes up, and comes with a broken sound. Spilling out over Billy's fingers and his shirt and his stomach, until he can do nothing more than slump against Billy's chest as his knot swells in his palm, whimpering against Billy's pulse and quaking.

Billy keeps his fist tight around Steve's knot, fingers a hot pressure around him, unrelenting until Steve is panting and making breathy little pained noises against the bite mark on Billy's neck.

It's so much. Billy can barely think, feeling dizzy and overwhelmed. And yet, he still wraps his other arm around Steve, pulling him close. Holding him.

"Fuck," he says, hips jerking just a little as Steve shudders a little, and, consequently, tightens around him again.

Steve grunts, entire body spasming, clenching up and mewling. He practically paws at Billy's shoulders, palms down over them as Billy pulls him closer, and kisses the bruises he left behind with his teeth, movements sluggish.

They're both panting. Both breathless and knotted, sensitive and twitching.

"Billy, Billy, Billy." Steve breathes, kissing along his jaw, biting at his ear and sobbing when it earns him a lurch from Billy's hips. " *God* . God, Billy -- love that you're *mine* ."

Billy goes a little loose at that, a little easy. There's something about the tone of Steve's voice, fond and rough and totally blissed, that tears Billy apart on the inside -- in the best way.

"Yeah," Billy says, voice softer than before. "Me too." It feels heavy, like a promise, a secret.

There's a lull of quiet, just the two of them breathing in the still emptiness of the car, before Billy huffs out a laugh, eyes focusing on the steamy windows around them.

"Holy shit," Billy says, hand slinking up Steve's spine. Affectionate.

Warm. “I can’t believe we just fucked in the alley behind the grocery store.”

Steve huffs out a little breath, chuffing a laugh against his skin before pulling back to meet his eyes, shivering, and giving a little roll of his hips. “Still fucking, technically.” Steve says, rubbing over his shoulders and down his arms.

Billy *whimpers* , oversensitive and pleasure-drunk. “We definitely are.”

And they are *so fucked* if they get caught. But honestly, if anyone caught them, they’d probably be so taken aback that Billy thinks he might just have enough time to speed out of there, even if Steve was still on his goddamn knot. And *that* thought has him chuckling a little, arm tightening around Steve’s back.

Steve smiles, and presses his lips to Billy’s temple. “What?”

“Just hope we don’t get caught, is all.”

Billy punctuates his words with a kiss, but keeps it short. He tastes like satisfaction and sex, and when he’s finished he presses his lips to Steve’s forehead.

Steve shivers. Makes a sound and goes pliant. He's aware, distantly, of the heat of Billy still in him, of his own knot still heavy and throbbing -- but nestling up closer to Billy, reveling in the closeness after such a rush of *need* , takes precedence.

He nudges at Billy's jaw with his nose and rubs his cheek along the line of Billy's throat. “I like this. Don't care if we get caught.”

“You’ll care when some bagboy gets to see your dick,” Billy says, though he bristles at his own comment.

He doesn’t *want* anyone to see Steve like this, and the thought has him burying his face against Steve’s throat and biting down, just because he can. Because his instincts tell him to claim Steve, to *not share* .

Steve tightens up, gasps out, and jerks. His eyes squeeze shut, and

he feels *owned* .

Completely and totally. Feels Billy's teeth and feels his knot, and knows he won't belong to anyone else like this.

" *Billy* ," he keens, cock jumping, when Billy bites down harder, when he squeezes at his knot --

And Steve comes. Writhes in his lap, sobs out and claws at his shoulders as he breaks apart completely.

Billy's not expecting it. Steve tightens around Billy's cock -- and it's not enough to get Billy to come again, too, but it has him gasping out, hips jerking up and into Steve's wet, hot, heat. A jolt of pleasure, spreading.

It's surprising and it's *dead fucking sexy* , Billy thinks, unable to keep himself from nosing at Steve's neck as he comes down from his orgasm, nuzzling him through the aftershocks. He feels Steve's knot pulse in his hand and Billy's fingers massage over him, providing warmth and pressure, milking him just to see him squirm a little bit more.

"Holy *shit* ," Billy breathes out. Amazed.

Steve hiccups out his name, hips moving, wriggling against him. He's shaking and *weak* , spent and so, so oversensitive. Over stimulated, by Billy's fingers and his knot, and he clenches around him and cries out breathlessly, body caught in a loop of pleasure and reaction and pleasure.

"S'too much," Steve pants, fingers trembling as he wraps them over Billy's wrist.

Billy pulls back from Steve's neck and arches an eyebrow at him. And *god* , Steve's a mess. It makes Billy want to come again, just looking at him.

He lightens up on the pressure, but keeps his fist around Steve's knot. "Too much, *stop,* or too much, *keep going?"*

Steve's face burns. Little quakes of *goodgoodgood* keep shivering up

through him, and he bites down on the inside of his cheek.

“Keep going,” he admits, on a breath, after a second.

“Jesus,” Billy says, voice wrecked. *That,* he can most definitely do.

He tightens his fingers again around Steve's knot, enough to provide the kind of pressure he might find while fucking into someone else. His brings his other hand around, dragging his fingertips through cooling come, and uses it as slick, wrapping his fingers around Steve's gradually softening dick.

Steve's thighs clamp down over Billy's hips. He cries out again, nails biting in at Billy's wrist, and he slaps his other hand over his mouth to muffle the long, drawn out moan he gives when his hips stutter. When pleasure burns so bright through him that it *hurts* . When he feels the jump of Billy's cock inside him, and the stroke of Billy's fingers over his sensitive length.

He shakes his head a little, like he's trying to keep himself from going crazy, from losing it right there in Billy’s lap -- but he ruts, clenching around him like his body is trying to milk Billy out the same way Billy is, eyes tearing up.

“You’re something else,” Billy says, breath going a little ragged. He’s starting to pant again, pleasure starting to ramp up inside him, even though he doubts his ability to actually come again.

But, then again, Steve is always full of surprises.

Steve is starting to harden in his hand again, but Billy doubts he’ll get as hard as he was before. But that suits Billy just fine. He likes the feeling of Steve’s cock in his hand with just a little bit of give, a little bit of softness. It reminds Billy of how much pleasure he’s given Steve, of just how many times Billy has brought him over the edge.

Steve is a *goddamn mess* . And it’s the hottest fucking thing Billy has ever seen.

“ *Billy* ,” Steve whines, completely gone.

Gone totally to sensation. To *heat.*

Steve feels stretched out, strung out, to the limits of bliss. Like pleasure is tearing holes into the fiber of him, and Billy is filling the cracks with his touch.

He sobs, realizes distantly that he's got tears down his face, and rocks helplessly into Billy's hand and onto his knot. Gasps and curls forward, tugging at Billy's wrist, as if to stop him -- even though a part of him, a greedy, hungry part, never wants it to end.

“Billy, I can't -- *I can't --”*

“C’mon, baby, ” Billy urges. He doesn't ease up, continuing working Steve over with his hand -- but he does spit into it a couple times, just to ease the way.

Billy growls, hips rocking into the warmth of Steve's body. He can't *thrust* with his knot, but he can still rut upward, trying to get impossibly closer.

“You *can* ,” Billy tell him. “God, fuck, Steve *I’m* getting close again. You can, baby. Come on. Come for me,” Billy pants.

Steve chokes on a moan, writhing. He feels his cock twitch in Billy's hold, and his knot is barely there, but still burning under Billy's fingers, like his body *needs* to give him what Billy wants. He can feel Billy moving in him, just grinding in, knot full and pulsing where he's locked into Steve's body, pressing in all of the worst ways that makes Steve gasp for each breath, that makes him buck and clench down, that makes his eyes roll back as his body *quivers* .

It's his words, though, that have Steve teetering. The way he coaxes him, urges him, and promises to pump Steve full. It's the way Billy is wringing him out to the point of complete destruction.

And Steve *needs* . Needs it so bad.

He reaches for him with shaking hands, takes Billy by the nape, clumsily tugs. Tries to get him closer. He's already begging when he bares his throat.

“ *Please,”* he says, voice a mess, and he knows he's asking for more than a bruise -- that he wants *more* than a bruise-- hiccuping out a cry

of Billy's name when Billy grinds up that much harder. “ *Please, please* , Billy, *please* .”

For a moment, Billy doesn’t know what Steve’s asking.

Steve’s throat is already bruised, already raw from Billy’s teeth. He thinks, maybe, that Steve just wanted more of that. Just like how Billy had wanted to feel Steve’s teeth on his neck while Steve was riding him, knowing it was what drove him over the edge. But -- it takes him a moment, a stupidly long one, all things considered, to realize and recognize what Steve is asking of him.

Billy licks over Steve’s neck, hips rolling and hand working Steve over. He presses his lips to bruise-warmed skin.

“Tell me what you want. Tell me,” Billy pants, unwilling to do what he *thinks* Steve wants without some sort of go-ahead. “Tell me, baby.”

Anything you want, Billy thinks, *I’d give it to you.*

Steve hiccups out another sound. His hips stutter.

He can hear his heart pounding between his ears, behind his back molars. He can taste it; how much he wants it. How much it'll hurt if Billy doesn't give it to him.

“Bite me,” he whispers, tangling his fingers into his hair. “ *Mark* me. Make it -- make me *yours* . *Please* .”

It's a goddamn gift. Billy doesn't deserve it -- but he'll take it.

With that permission, that *plea* , Billy bites down. He aims a little lower than where he centered those bruises, teeth clamping down on skin. He presses hard -- then harder, until he tastes blood on his tongue, canines breaking skin first.

It's like he's drinking Steve down, tasting his everything. After all they've shared, it's the final piece. Billy groans with it, hips rutting upward as his hand keeps working Steve over -- all while his teeth remain firmly in Steve's neck.

Something *clicks* into place. Something restless Steve had never

known was stirring *settles* . Steve gasps, whimpering, and as Billy touches him and rocks into him and *bites him* -- Steve falls.

It isn't violent. It doesn't hit him, like a lot of orgasms with Billy do, but it floods -- soft and hot and *certain* . He spills out, still gasping, abdomen winding tight, and he clutches Billy close, Billy's name on his lips like a prayer.

It's all Billy needs to tip over the edge. It's not even the way Steve tightens around him, or the way his cock twitches in Billy's hand -- it's the sounds he makes, the way he says Billy's name.

Billy's never heard anything sound quite like that before. So perfect, so beautiful.

He comes quietly, choking out a breath over Steve's skin. Against bruising and blood.

When Billy takes a breath, ragged and shaking, he pulls back slightly, tongue lapping over the bite, just so he can get a good look at it.

Steve shakes, whining from the back of his throat, and the bite *pulses* . He can feel his heart beat there, beating for Billy, for their bond.

Jesus, they're *bonded.*

Steve hadn't thought that was something they could have. Didn't think he'd feel this rush of endorphins, this dizziness, this *belonging* -- but he does. He feels the chords of his heart reaching out toward Billy's and echoing back.

"Billy," Steve breathes, shuddering, eyes wide and lips parted, neck *tender* .

Billy feels Steve's breath in his ears, in his skin, in his own lungs. He hears Steve's heartbeat pounding inside his own veins, like part of Steve is sharing that space with him, that awareness, that physicality. Steve's contentment, his surprise, his *everything* , creeps into Billy's bones. It settles right underneath his skin, weaving itself into the very fabric of Billy's being.

"Steve," Billy whispers.

He pulls back, cupping Steve’s face in between tender hands. No space for a breath, Billy kisses him, long and slow and deep. Like he’s starving for it -- like he’s drowning.

Steve clutches at him. He feels like crying, like laughing, and he ends up halfway between the two, smiling and huffing against Billy's lips as one kiss leads to another.

He can taste his own blood. He thinks it should be gross. The tang of copper. It isn't.

He kisses Billy until his lips are tender too, blood staining the collar of his shirt, fingers trembling as he pets through Billy's hair -- elated and soothing and awestruck.

There's something hot in his chest. Hot and bright and burning brighter -- like the birth of a star -- and he realizes it's *Billy* . He sobs out a laugh, against his mouth, and then peppers kisses all over his face, like he can't get enough, like he can't contain this overwhelming *adoration* .

Billy, it seems, is just as dizzy with it. His eyes are glassy, his pupils blown. When he pulls back and looks at Steve, he’s panting and disheveled and he looks like he’s been shaken to the core.

“Fuck,” Billy says, running his tongue over his kiss-bitten lips. His body is buzzing with energy, with *life* . “Holy *shit* .”

It shouldn’t be possible, Billy thinks. It’s *wrong* .

But is it? If it happened, is it really, truly *wrong* ?

“Are you okay?” Billy finds himself asking -- but knows, somehow, that he doesn’t even need to. He already knows the answer.

Steve laughs, nodding his head, kissing him again. Then again.

“Are you?”

“Yeah,” Billy says, between kisses. “I am.”

-*-

Errands are put on the backburner in favor of Billy speeding across town so that they can grab a quick shower and a change of clothes at Steve's house.

For once their shower is quick and mostly just business -- but even then, as connected as they are, the whole experience feels oddly intimate. Running soapy hands over Steve's back, getting Steve's responding thrum of contentment in the back of his skull is -- well, it's a lot. It's not bad, not even a little, but it leaves Billy dizzy and reeling.

Steve's still drying off his hair when Billy stumbles out of the bathroom and collapses, naked save for a damp towel around his hips, on Steve's bed. He stares at the ceiling for a while, focusing on the heat in his chest that screams *SteveSteveSteve* .

When Steve pads in, he's putting a new watch on and pursing his lips at it, towel hung around his shoulders and nothing else on. There's still water on his skin, and he keeps trying to shove his wet hair out of his face. He's beautiful.

"If we leave in ten minutes, we should still be able to get there on time." Steve says, then glances up, meets Billy's eyes and smiles. "You sure you're okay?"

Billy nods, even though he doesn't need to.

"Yeah, I'm good. I just --" he pauses for a moment, taking stock. He feels *centered* , in a way he never realized he wasn't, before. "I didn't think -- I never once thought…" But Billy doesn't need to finish that sentence, because Steve knows. And he knows Steve knows.

He never thought this would be possible for them.

It still seems impossible when they're driving down backroads Billy's never even seen, hand over the middle console, fingers laced with Steve's. Every time Billy steals little glances of Steve, hair still damp, face caught in a smile, Billy can't stop himself from thinking how goddamn *lucky* he is. Undeserving, but lucky nonetheless.

Steve squeezes his hand every now and then. Strokes over the back of

it with his thumb.

He keeps his eyes forward, on the trees, but his attention seems to always come back to Billy. To that strange, new *thrumming* between them.

“Make a right here,” Steve says. “Then find a place to park. We'll have to walk the rest of the way.”

Billy parks somewhere where the grass isn’t too long, where they won’t be climbing over underbrush to get out of the car. Not that it really matters, because they’re almost immediately traipsing through the woods, anyway.

Billy’s not really a *woods*- guy. He’s much more *beaches and boardwalks.* He grimaces when a twig gets him in the back of the neck, moving to hover closer to Steve, who seems to know the way by heart, who is lighting their path by *flashlight* . What the fuck.

“You sure you’re not bringing me out here to kill me?” Billy asks.

Steve glances over at him, smile wry, and Billy *knows* that Steve would be taking his hand again, if his arms weren't full of paper grocery bags. “There are plenty of better places to take you if I wanted to kill you.”

He leads him, through thicker and thicker trees, and then stops, right before a small cabin nestled in the dusk. Steve looks back at Billy again, and there's something in his posture, something jittery, and he gestures forward with his chin.

“Follow close,” Steve says. “There's a trip wire.”

A trip wire , Billy mouths from behind Steve, wondering just what the hell he’s gotten himself into.

But he follows close anyway, eyes on Steve’s feet, making sure to step tall when Steve does, over the wire Steve shines the flashlight on. If Billy had been out here alone, he would’ve fallen over it and probably gotten himself shot. Or exploded. Or caught in a net -- or whatever the goddamn wire does. Then again, Billy would never be out in the middle of the Indiana wilderness alone in the first place, so

he’s got Steve to thank for that one.

But -- time spent with Steve is time spent with Steve. And there’s no place Billy would rather be than at Steve’s side, especially now.

Everything feels different, now.

Steve doesn't even get a chance to knock on the door. It swings open, before he can try to juggle his things around, and in the threshold, a little girl Billy’s never seen before stands.

“Hey, El.”

Her eyes dart, between Steve and between Billy, and then they narrow. “Hopper said you were bringing a friend. That's not a friend.”

“El--”

“It's more. Bigger. Brighter.” She looks up at Steve and takes him by the wrist, tugging, big eyes curious and pleading. “You will explain.”

Steve sighs out a laugh. “Pretty sure we've talked about this.”

“You will explain. Please?”

Steve grins down at her and then over at Billy. “El, this is Billy. He's my… my bond mate. Billy, this is Hopper’s daughter, Jane.”

Billy takes the bags from Steve, if only just so he has something to do with his hands. Billy -- isn’t great with kids. He’s not great with people in general. He’s not even all that great with *Steve* , for all the mistakes he’s made.

But it still warms his goddamn heart to hear Steve call him his *bond mate* .

“Hey,” Billy says, feeling a little confused, for so *many* reasons. “So, is it Jane, or is it El?”

“Both,” she says, at the same time that Steve says: “Either.”

And then Steve is ushering Billy in, the door locking behind them, and El follows close behind as they file into the kitchen. Her eyes are big and brown and unrelenting, burning on Billy as Steve makes quick work of stacking things into the fridge.

Billy finds the freezer mostly empty, and piles the, frankly too many, boxes of Eggos inside. But, from the way the kid's eyeing the boxes as Billy puts them away, it looks like they're important. A favorite snack, probably. Billy can't blame her -- he'd loved them as a kid, too.

" *What* ?" Billy finally says, when he turns and finds that El is *still* looking at him. Really, she should be looking at Steve, Billy thinks, with that fresh bite-mark peeking out from underneath his collar when he turns in just the right way.

She doesn't even flinch. Just cocks her head over, glances at Steve, and back at Billy.

"You're very happy," she says, almost like it's a question. "It's not a dream. Real."

Steve shuts the fridge door and looks at her. "Hey. No snooping. Not without --"

"Permission. Sorry, Steve." El's cheeks color a little. "But he can snoop too, now. With you. How?"

Steve makes a face. "I feel like that's a conversation you should have with Hop, not me."

Billy -- Billy has no idea what the fuck is going on. He doesn't really like the way this little girl looks at him like she's looking *through* him, like he's laid bare for someone else to see. He already has that, now, with Steve. And that's -- going to take some getting used to, honestly.

Billy doesn't know what else to do, now that all the groceries are put away. So he starts *snooping* himself, feeling a little on edge because he doesn't have the whole story here, because he doesn't know what's going on. But he keeps his casual perusing to just popping open random cabinets in the kitchen and looking inside. He doesn't find

anything, other than mismatched dishware and a lot of easy-mac.

“Hey,” Steve breathes, touches his fingertips to the small of Billy's back, and when he looks, El has disappeared into her room, looks like she's looking for something, a book in her hands, and Steve's face is as gentle as his touch. “It's okay. This is okay, right? She's just… curious. About you. And, hell, Billy, I don't even --”

He cuts himself off. Takes a breath. Looks at Billy like he's something spectacular.

“I can *feel you* ,” Steve says. “Right under my skin. And I don't know what to do with that. But I've gotta make dinner for her, and then probably watch some TV until Hop gets home. And then we can -- we can go somewhere. Talk about it. All of it.”

Billy nods. His teeth are clenched and he’s *happy* , he *is* -- but he also feels so strange and different and unsure. He feels so exposed and it’s strange. He’s so used to hiding parts of himself that it feels wrong and also a little terrifying to just have someone be able to *see* him.

“Okay. We’ll talk,” Billy says.

And then the girl is back again, standing tall and strange next to them, book clutched to her chest. Billy wonders if Max and her are friends. He wonders why she’s not at school, why he’s never seen her before.

“So, what’s for dinner, King Steve?” Billy asks.

El’s eyes light up, but Steve is already frowning down at her. “Food *then* Eggos. Deal?”

“Vegetables are an important for a growing body,” she says, sounds like she's quoting someone, and Steve smiles.

“Tuna noodle casserole?”

“Please.” El nods, then looks at Billy, holding out the book. “Sit with me. I'm not very good, yet. With big words.”

“Okay,” Billy says.

He slides into a chair at the kitchen table, right next to where El has planted herself. It looks like she's trying to make her way through a well-loved copy of *The Phantom Tollbooth* , which Billy is more than happy to help her read. He remembers reading it when he was younger, curled up near his Mom's bed as she slept through some summer afternoons.

He pronounces a few words, explaining them for El when she gets to them, and eventually finds himself scooching his chair closer to her, leaning on the table so he can read the words over her shoulder.

That, somehow, turns into Billy reading sentences, which turn into paragraphs, which turns into El shoving the book at him.

"Read," she tells him.

She doesn't leave much room for argument, so Billy reads.

She listens, chin cradled in her palm, while Steve putters at the stove and oven. She listens, smile small and warm, as Billy reads and reads and reads.

"Good voice," she says, after a while, and leans in like she's telling him a secret. "Steve likes your voice."

Billy squints. He doesn't look at Steve, just keeps his back to him. Tries to think of *not-Steve* , unsure how he's supposed to have something like a secret anymore.

He's never known anyone who was actually bonded. Not really, anyway.

"Does he?" Billy asks, curious.

El hums. "He told me. When I asked why you were friends. He likes other things, too. He didn't tell me all of them."

Billy can't help but laugh a little, amused by the idea that they're friends because Steve likes the sound of his voice. Even more amused that he'd tell some random girl that.

"Huh," Billy says. "Thanks for telling me, kid."

He has to admit, she's far less annoying than the rest of the kids Steve enjoys hanging out with. She's pushy and firm, sure, but she doesn't leave Billy feeling frustrated and exasperated.

So: "Want me to keep reading?" he asks.

"Yes," she says, nodding and eager, then purses her lips. "He won't snoop. Knows better. He won't unless you tell him it's okay."

"What," Billy says, "like get all up in my head, you mean?"

"Yes," El says, tone so sure, so certain. "He cares too much. He's kind. Likes you. All of you. Even the parts you don't. He won't snoop."

Billy makes a face. "He does care too much, that's for sure."

But he doesn't know if he believes her. He knows Steve is too nice, and Billy trusts him -- but it's so new, so strange.

"Next chapter, then," he says, and starts reading again.

By the time he's finished, Steve's got dinner out on the table. It's just a casserole, but it's steaming and covered in cheese -- hiding the vegetables Billy can see scattered throughout.

Steve takes the spot next to Billy, touches their knees together under the table, and offers him a small smile. They eat like that, until they're all stuffed, and when they've finished, El clears the table.

"Still good?" Steve asks, and then carefully takes one of Billy's hands in his.

"Yeah," he says, because it's true.

Billy *is* good, even though he feels different and strange and unsure. Even with all that, everything adds up to *good* , he's pretty damn sure.

Billy twists their fingers together and watches El wash the dishes out of the corner of his eye. "So, you do this often? *Actually* babysit?" Though Billy is sure El would object to the term.

“Once in a while,” Steve shrugs, and the pleased little shiver that comes with Billy’s fingers in his echoes into Billy. “When Hop has to work late and catch up on paperwork.”

“That’s so weird,” Billy says, in a whisper, eyeing their fingers. He squeezes Steve’s hand and pulls his tongue over his lips. “Real weird.” He has so many questions, but he knows now isn’t the time or the place for it.

“The babysitting?” Steve asks, head tilting, smile small as he squeezes at Billy's fingers. “Or this?”

Billy rolls his eyes, and he knows Steve can feel his amusement. “This,” he says, offering Steve another squeeze. “I already know you’re a nerd who babysits.”

“I feel like I should be offended,” Steve says, but he's still smiling, and his eyes drop to Billy’s mouth. “But I really just wanna kiss you.”

Billy’s eyes dart back to El and he frowns. “When we’re in the car.”

It feels weird, to kiss Steve here. Or maybe, Billy is just off-balance.

Steve's smile just gets bigger, brighter. He squeezes at Billy's hand again.

“Promise?”

“Yeah,” Billy says with a nod. “Like I’d duck out on *that* promise.”

Kissing Steve? Really not a hardship.

“Deal,” Steve says. “I'll hold you to that.”

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The rest of the night passes easily. A bit slow, honestly, because Steve can feel his own anxiety itch under his skin after a third episode of *I Love Lucy* . Can feel Billy’s, too, buzzing at the back of his head.

But his hand doesn't leave Steve's, after they settle onto the couch. Stays there even after El has dozed off, in a bundle, on the floor in

front of the TV. Stays there even when Hopper knocks on the door once, then twice, and Steve stands to let him in.

Steve still feels the lingering warmth of it, of *Billy* , as he pulls away. It's practically all he can focus on, Billy thrumming in his veins, and it's as terrifying as it is grounding.

“Hey, Hop.” Steve says, as he lets him in, and Hopper takes off his hat with a sigh.

“Good night?” He asks, then blinks and takes a deep breath, brows flying up. “Or do I wanna know?”

Steve feels his face go red.

Steve can also feel Billy’s immediate panic, hot and sharp and electric. It edges right under Steve’s skin, so thick and prickly that Steve would swear it’s tangible. Billy stiffens as he comes to stand at his side, too, when Hopper’s eyes fall on him, but he stays quiet.

He slides his hand over Billy's wrist, where his watch rests, and gives a little squeeze. “I don't imagine you want to know the details.”

“I don't imagine I do,” Hop mutters, hands on his hips, but then he sighs again and waves a hand. “How was she tonight?”

“Nosy,” Steve says. “But no more than usual. She read a bit. With Billy.”

Hopper arches a brow. “Good. I guess I should send you two on your way, then.”

“There's leftovers,” Steve says. “Don't forget to eat.”

“Get outta here, Harrington.” Hopper scoffs out a laugh, clapping a hand onto Steve's shoulder and patting him before glancing at his neck. “And get that bandaged up. You don't want something important like that getting infected.”

“Will do,” Steve says. “Thanks, Hop.”

“Anytime, kid.” He brushes by them, and only stops when Steve is

pulling Billy halfway out the door already. “And you let me know. If anyone gives you trouble, *either of you* , you let me know.”

“Thanks, Hop.” Steve says, feels something like shock zip through him, and knows it isn't his own. “Have a good night.”

And then they're stepping out, into the chill of the night, into the dark. Steve's hand is still on Billy.

Billy seems to relax a little once he’s outside. Steve can practically watch him deflate, can *feel* the way Billy comes back into himself.

“You really think it could get infected?” Billy asks, even though that doesn't at all feel like what he *wants* to say. And isn't that confusing as hell.

But Billy's hand is still in Steve's, and he stands close enough that Steve can feel his warmth.

“I dunno,” Steve shrugs, reaches up, and touches the tender skin with his fingertips. “I guess it's like any wound, right? It wouldn't hurt, at least until it's healed up a bit.”

“Hey, don’t touch it,” Billy says, fingers wrapping around Steve’s wrist. Steve thrums with secondhand worry, concern. It itches underneath Steve’s skin like a fading sunburn: present, but ignorable, if he wanted to.

He doesn't really want to.

He *likes it* , feeling Billy, knowing that he's there, just under his skin. It's jarring as it is totally settling, and Steve revels in the bursts and waves he feels cresting at the back of his skull and in his veins.

Billy's *his* . And he's Billy’s.

He can see the moment Billy feels it -- Steve's own satisfaction, his affection-- because his eyes go a little wide and his fingers curl a little tighter over his wrist.

“Why not?” Steve asks, eyes on Billy's.

“Because,” Billy says, riding on the waves of Steve’s own satisfaction. And Steve can feel *that* , too -- that little uptick in Billy’s mood, overshadowing the current of confusion that’s followed him all night. “Then it’ll get infected, and you could get hurt.” He steps into Steve’s space, in the darkness of the woods, and wraps his arms around him, burying his face on the other side of Steve’s neck. “I don’t want you hurt. I thought I made that pretty clear.”

Steve had known, yes, that Billy had said that. Said it a few times, used it as an excuse to keep this from happening at all.

But to *feel* it? To feel that utter, overwhelming *protectiveness* ? It's a whole different animal.

Steve feels like he might buckle under the weight of it.

“Clear as a bell,” Steve mutters, wrapping Billy up in his arms. “ *Jesus* , Billy.”

“Shove it,” Billy mumbles against Steve’s neck. Billy, clearly, knows exactly what Steve’s talking about. “We should go back to your place. Get you actually cleaned up. Put a fucking...bandaid on that.”

“I don't think a *bandaid* will do the trick, Billy.” Steve says, but he's grinning.

Billy huffs. “A bandaid definitely isn’t going to keep your friends from noticing.” He groans, like a realization has suddenly hit him as he pulls back. “Or the fucking *kids* .”

“Billy,” Steve says, twists his wrists and catches both of Billy's hands in his. “The whole school knows we're together. What's the problem with the kids knowing that, too?”

He brings his hands up to his mouth. Kisses the backs of his knuckles, then the heel of one palm, then his wrist where the watch sits.

“You told me I was your mate this morning,” Steve says, mutters against his pulse, can feel it against his lips. “And now we're bond mates. I get that it's overwhelming. I'm kinda freaking out, too. But I don't care who knows -- because I want everyone to know.”

“They matter,” Billy says. “They matter to you. The people at school, they don't.”

Billy moves, then, looping an arm around Steve's waist and turning back toward the car. Past the trip wire and all the branches that snag into their hair.

“This is *permanent* ,” Billy says, talking again after moments of silence. “They weren't going to like it before and now they're going to -- I don't know -- lose their shit?” There's a beat, punctuated with something that roils in Steve's gut before Billy says: “I don't regret it. I don't. I just -- don't want you to.”

And *that's* the undercurrent that Steve has been feeling all night, seeping in from Billy: fear.

Steve stops sharply, abruptly. Feet planting in the brush and refusing to budge. Billy looks at him, frown growing more severe, and Steve can feel fear pulse at the back of his head, in his chest, at the back of his mouth.

Can taste it. Bitter and cold and awful.

“Billy,” he starts, and his voice is wavering because he hadn't *known* . He didn't *know* that something so dreadful lurked in Billy the same way it haunted Steve. And somehow -- somehow that cements everything. “Billy, if I could bite into you right now, and bond with you, I would. But the only thing I regret is that we rushed into this in the front seat of your car.”

He shuffles forward a step. Sees Billy’s eyes go wide. His voice dips, with promise.

“When I bite you again, when I mark you like you've marked me, I'm going to do it right.” Steve says. “When I mark you, and I do mean *when,* it's going to be fucking perfect.”

For one beautiful moment, Billy’s fear is absolutely overshadowed by something brilliant and bright. It feels like want, like hope.

“Yeah?” Billy asks, a little quieter than normal. “You want that?”

Steve knows he's imagining it. It's nothing concrete, no images or clear thoughts, just a mash of emotions that feel like affection and need and desire.

What Billy really means, Steve knows, is: *I want that.*

“Yes,” Steve breathes. “More than anything. I don't regret it. I don't regret you, Billy.”

Billy pulls Steve into a hug, warm and all encompassing. He presses his face against Steve's neck to breathe, then leans back to kiss Steve.

“We should go,” Billy says. “These woods are giving me the creeps.”

Steve huffs out a laugh, taking Billy’s face between his hands. “You've no idea.”

But he kisses him one more time, takes his hand, and leads him out of the dark.

14. nobody loves no one

Notes for the Chapter:

> WARNINGS: IT'S THE FINAL COUNTDOWNNN; confessions; sweet, sweet confessions; I repeat: unrealistic 1980s Happy Ending because fuck sad shit, I want my idiot boys happy and in love; Billy Hargrove is a territorial bastard; Steve Harrington is too sweet for the world, someone please protect him; vague bond things, we really didn't dive too deep into this, but it's there and it's real; Billy Hargrove, absolute slut for Steve Harrington; Steve Harrington, big time cock sucker for Billy Hargrove; I just loved writing this and I'm sad it's over.
>
> ALSO: cheese with a side of extra cheese

“What about this one?”

Steve slides a newspaper across the pink diner table and into Billy’s field of vision. Billy’s barely had coffee yet, has already smoked two cigarettes this morning, and is nursing a fresh black eye. He beat a tactical retreat from under his father’s roof last night, opting to spend the night in Steve’s bed instead of his car.

Or rather, Steve had happened upon Billy *trying* to sleep in his car on his way back from dropping the Henderson kid off, and had cajoled Billy into coming back to his place.

And -- it’s not that Billy didn’t *want* to spend the night at Harrington’s. He always does. It’s why he couldn’t get himself to park his car any further than two blocks away from Steve’s house, which is also subsequently how Steve happened upon him in the first place. Not too many Camaros around Hawkins, as it happens.

But it’s just -- Billy’s got pride, alright?

The bond between them is new and fresh and raw. It’s unfamiliar and wonderful, but it also makes Billy feel *so exposed,* so needy for

everything Harrington can give him. It's like he's a black hole, empty and hungry and constantly reaching for Steve and his comfort. Steadily eating him up. And Billy can't just keep running to Steve whenever he feels upset or hurt or angry. He knows he can't do that to Steve, can't be that kind of burden.

Billy Hargrove has never been that kind of person. He doesn't want to be. He wants this thing, this beautiful, terrifying thing to be even.

The words swim in front of him, blurry through tired eyes. "It says it requires a deposit. Even if I get a job, I don't have enough saved up for a deposit."

Billy should be the one trolling the classifieds, not Steve.

A bubble of frustration-guilt-hope wells up between the two of them, oily and velvety. It's a little dizzying, not knowing which direction it is coming from, whether it's Steve's frustration or Billy's guilt or -- any combination. Billy trains his eyes on the scabbing mark on Steve's neck and lets his hand find Steve's over the paper, fingers lacing into Steve's. Then, at least, the frustration ebbs into something calmer, something softer.

"Sorry," Billy says. "I'm just --"

The end of the year is rapidly approaching. Billy'll be eighteen soon. He can pack up, move out, and never look back. He has hope for the future, for his future *with Steve* , now -- but it's proving to be harder than he originally thought. A little more soul crushing.

"I haven't heard back from anywhere I applied," Billy says. "If no one will hire me, I *can't* move out."

Steve squeezes at his fingers, and his smile is soft, even if it is a bit tight around the edges. "Someone will hire you. Fuck, Billy, even if it's only… bagging groceries at first, you'll get started, and you'll get there, and --"

Steve cuts himself off. He wets his lips and eyes Billy for a moment, and there's that little stir-- that ebb and flow of *feeling* -- that churns and flows from Steve to Billy and back again. *Guiltfrustrationhope* --

and Steve hesitates.

“Listen, I'm not exactly the brightest bulb in the house, and I-- like, I *know that* . I'm not getting into college, and the best chances I've got are honestly working for my dad.” His tone is derisive, toward the end, and there's a hint of *shame* in there somewhere. “But you're a smart guy. You could probably get in anywhere you wanted, and I-- I'd be happy to support that. If you'd let me. I've got the deposit.”

Billy swallows, fingers tightening around Steve’s.

“I can’t take that, Steve. You know I can’t.” Billy would rather be sleeping on Steve’s couch, even though he knows Steve would never let him when there’s a perfectly good bed, than have Steve pay for a place for Billy to live. Even if it’s just a deposit. “But I’ll keep looking.”

He lets Steve’s *hope* spark his own into something a little brighter, lets it fuel him.

And then, Billy reaches over and flicks Steve on the nose. “And stop saying you’re stupid. We both know you aren’t. Sure, you can’t write an essay for *shit* , but you’re smart.”

Steve's nose wrinkles up and he leans back a bit, kicking at the toe of Billy’s boot with a crooked little smile. “I know I'm not *stupid* , Billy. Which is why I'm telling you I've got the deposit. Because I do. For my own place. And, if it just happens to have enough space for two people, then…”

Steve shrugs, eyes straying down. Coy and a bit playful. But there's *hopehopehope* beating between them.

Billy’s heart skips and he knows Steve can feel it, because Steve’s lips quirk a bit into a smile.

“God you’re such an *asshole* , why were you even showing me the classifieds if you already had a plan?” But Billy is positively brimming with something bright and electric and it feels more like joy than he’d really care to put a name to.

Billy tosses the paper in Steve’s face. When Steve pulls it down with a

laugh, Billy leans across the diner table and kisses him.

Steve is smiling when he kisses back. Smiling when Billy pulls away. Smiling as he takes a sip of coffee and clears his throat.

“You're picky,” he says, and it's a bald faced lie. “I didn't want to decide on a place and have you hate it.”

Months ago, Billy would have been afraid of people in the diner seeing them. Now, he finds that he doesn’t even care who saw them kiss -- though, the dead time of day *does* help calm his nerves a little.

“Uh huh,” Billy says. “Or you were worried I’d say no.”

He wants to ask Steve if he’s *sure* -- but he knows that Steve is. Knows it in the same way that he knows Steve doesn’t regret the bonding mark on his neck, even if they went into it rushed and reckless.

Steve ducks his head. “Maybe a little worried.”

Billy smiles, feet intertwining with Steve’s below the table. “Look, I’m not going to let you keep me like some house-husband, or let you pay my way through school or something -- but I can live with you. I can keep up my side of rent as long as I get a job.”

If anyone will hire Billy Hargrove, that is.

Steve nudges at his ankle, smiling. “Get a damn job, then, Hargrove. I don't put out for free loaders.”

“I’m sure you don’t,” Billy says, feeling a little more secure about what he’s doing now, what *they’re* doing now. “You think I’d be good at yard work?” Billy says, snatching the paper back from its half-crumpled spot on the table, eyes catching on a classified ad.

Steve seems to choke on a laugh. “I think you'd rake in extra cash for being eye candy to all the suburban moms. That's not supposed to be an encouragement, by the way.”

It totally *is* an encouragement, though.

“You think I could make tips if I didn’t wear a shirt?” Billy grins,

looking down at himself, at where his shirt is only buttoned up halfway, now that the weather is starting to get warmer.

He's perfect eye candy for all of the lonely housewives, especially unmarked as he is. But -- that's going to change, soon.

"Would you feel better about it," Billy asks, "if I had your mark on me?"

He's kind of joking, but also not. He figured Steve would bite him once Billy was moved out and they were approaching stability. And that's not off the table at all, but it's also not -- something they've spent all that long daydreaming about together.

Something hot and wanting burns in Steve's eyes. Billy can feel it -- how much he *wants* -- and it's breathtaking. Knocks his lungs clean empty.

Steve retracts, though. Like he knows it's an overwhelming sensation because he, himself, is overwhelmed by it -- Billy can tell, by the tremor in his fingers, the way the tips of his ears go red, the way his throat works.

He sits back in his side of the booth, receding all contact so there's a bit of buffer, face burning as he nods.

"Better," Steve admits. "But not wholly great about the entire female populace getting an eyefull. Though, I imagine convincing you would be as difficult as trying to get you to button your shirt up at school and stop distracting me."

Billy shrugs his shoulders, a loose sort of movement. "I mean, sure, you can't tell me what to do," Billy says. "But if it makes you that uncomfortable, the appeal's kind of gone, you know? No matter how much fun it would be to convince you that I've only got eyes for you."

And -- as silly as Billy's words are, as teasing -- that's when it hits him: jesus, he's willing to put Steve first without really thinking about it. It shouldn't be so flooring, but it is. Hell, he cares about Steve a lot -- feels it with every fibre of his being -- but affection has

never come naturally to Billy Hargrove, and neither has the action of putting others before himself.

If Billy wants to do something, everyone else's opinions are always damned. But this time? This time, he didn't even *think about it* .

Billy makes a face, a little affronted at himself and a lot surprised. "Pretty boy, I think you *broke me* ."

Steve snorts out a laugh, but his brows are pinched, a little wrinkle forming over his nose. "I didn't even do anything. How could I have broken you?"

Billy rolls his eyes, kicking a little at Steve's feet with his toe. "Because I don't give a shit about anybody." Because he told himself years ago that *Billy Hargrove doesn't care* .

Clearly, *clearly* he had been pretty damn wrong.

Steve's face just twists up more. "You might have to spell this out for me, babe. I'm not getting it."

"Look, if you don't want me to do something -- I won't do it. Plain and simple." Billy grits his teeth together, but he's not annoyed, per-say, but he is a little shocked by his own willingness to give like this. And it's not even *giving* -- it's just wanting Steve to be happy, being willing to compromise for that. "I don't think I would've done that before."

Before *you* , he means. And he feels it, the warmth shared between them, the bond.

Steve blinks a few times, eyes flitting over Billy's face, his shoulders, down to his hands. There's a little push, not much, just so that Billy knows what Steve's doing -- feeling at what's between them, for what Billy isn't exactly saying, but what he means. Gentle and not prying, like Steve is carding his fingers through his hair, pushing it away from his face, just to get a better look at him.

"Oh," he breathes, and then slides a sneaker between Billy's boots beneath the table, hooking his heel behind one of Billy's ankles. "I see."

His smile goes soft, then. Something pleased and happy and *comfortable* thrumming through Billy by way of Steve. Like Steve had never before felt so settled, like Billy is the only one who can make him feel that way. Content. Safe.

It makes him want to preen a little.

“Same. I give a shit about what you think.” Steve says. “And I wouldn't ever stop you doing something you wanted to -- not like that, anyway. There's no harm in making a little extra cash off of your natural… assets.”

Steve grins a little. Pointedly lets his eyes stray.

“And I think I wouldn't mind much at all, especially with my mark on you.” Steve adds. “It's a bit like showing off. Though, I wouldn't complain if you tried to convince me.”

“Yeah?” Billy asks, tugging a little at Steve’s foot. “I *guess* I could try and convince you. Argue my case a little bit.” And Billy likes that everything’s so easy with Steve, that it just feels right, even if it’s *new* . “I think that convincing should start with pie, though. You look like a guy who could use some cherry cobbler,” Billy says.

Which is to say, cherry cobbler is the pie of the day, and it’s Billy’s favorite.

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The bite Billy left on him, permanent and warm, sits easily, even bandaged and healing, beneath the collar of a polo. It does nothing, however, to hide it.

Even without it, though, the entire school and the entirety of Hawkins, Indiana would know that Billy and Steve are *something.*

After all, Billy Hargrove had broken Tommy’s nose over it. Had come out to the entire school, right then, and then proceeded to rub it in everyone's faces that both alphas were officially off the market. Then, the next day, Steve had shown up with a fresh *bite* , and no one had shut up about it in the weeks since.

Whispers in the halls at school -- *Do you think they're looking for an omega to share? How long have they been, well, you know? Bonded! Can you imagine?*-- and talk in the streets and stores and homes -- *Two alphas? That's a damn shame. A waste. It's gotta be just a phase, right?*-- and it seemed as if the whole world, small as it was in Hawkins, knew about them and their new bond.

The only people they weren't talking about it to, were Billy and Steve, the bonded in question. Too afraid or too disgusted or too shocked to risk it.

Even Nancy and Jonathan, even the shitheads, don't seem to want to bring it up.

Steve doesn't really mind that. Likes getting to keep some of the details, to keep Billy, to himself for a while longer.

Even if Nancy gives him curious, narrow eyed looks from time to time. Or Dustin looks like he wants to ask, but doesn't. Or Will stares at them with wide eyes, like he can't believe it's possible.

“He's doing it again,” Billy says, but his back is to Will’s wide, searching gaze, jaw tight, and Steve stifles a laugh into his drink, the smell of pizza in the air and the sound of games and laughter filling the spaces between.

Steve glances over Billy's shoulder, sees Will look away sharply. “He's just curious. It's not like you see a bonded pair everyday. Let alone a pair of alphas.”

“The kid’s *weird* , baby,” Billy says, but it lacks the normal heat behind Billy’s words, behind the implication. After all, for all intents and purposes, being in a *bonded* pair of alphas, which shouldn’t even be *possible* , is probably weirder than getting lost in the woods, or whatever Billy’s heard about him.

Billy reaches over and steals one of Steve’s crusts, chomping on it with his mouth open.

“Well, you've got no manners,” Steve replies, tone dry as he leans against one of the arcade boxes, arms crossed over his chest, drink

dangling from his fingers -- and he's reminded, briefly, of a party months old, reveling in Billy's attention and wondering what it would take to keep it.

Billy grins, full of teeth.

"You like me because I don't have any manners," Billy says, and shovels another bite of crust into his mouth. Then, he makes a face and bares his teeth at a random kid standing nearby. "What are *you* looking at?"

Still, even subdued as he is, Billy has the uncanny ability to go from zero to a hundred in a blink of an eye. So fast and so hard that Steve feels like maybe he should hold Billy back.

"You're standing in front of Pacman," Steve says, pulling Billy by the wrist, thumb dragging over his pulse; soothing, or trying to, the way Billy's hackles raise.

There's a growl in Billy's throat, loud enough that Steve can hear it, and so can the kid. Even when Billy moves away from the machine, pulled by Steve, the kid knows better than to go for it and disappears into another part of the arcade.

"That's not what his face said," Billy mumbles, tucking himself against Steve's side, glaring now at anyone who gets too close.

"Billy," Steve chides. "You're just gonna make them stare more."

Steve can hear Billy's teeth click together it's so loud -- or maybe he's just so close.

"Yeah?"

He noses at Steve's ear, loops a arm around the back of him and tucks his hand into Steve's back pocket. Steve can feel it when Billy locks eyes with someone else, annoyance flaring in his gut that is not his own.

"Well they can *screw off!* " Billy snarls at some kid who Steve recognizes as a sophomore.

“ *Billy* ,” Steve tugs at his shirt, and he's a bit winded, honestly, by the burning in his gut -- is always a bit floored by how much anger is in Billy. “Enough.”

And just like that -- Billy goes quiet against Steve. Maybe it’s something about Steve’s calm, or the way he’s gotten overwhelmed with Billy’s feelings -- or maybe it’s just Billy doing what Steve asks. Steve doesn’t know, doesn’t think it really matters, as long as Billy doesn’t start throwing punches in the middle of the arcade.

“Can we,” Billy asks, voice trailing off as his eyes dart around until they land on Max and Lucas and Dustin sitting at a table near the corner. And Steve knows Billy’s feeling a little desperate, because the next words out of Billy’s mouth are: “Can we go over there?”

“Yeah,” Steve nods, hesitates, and then presses a lingering kiss to his cheek. “Lead the way?”

Billy keeps his arm around Steve and ushers him toward the corner table where the kids are sitting. Billy *looks* nonchalant and cool, but Steve can feel the way he’s a little on edge -- even though he’s clearly refusing to back off from Steve, which would probably lessen all the attention they’re getting.

But it seems to help a bit, letting Billy move him to the side toward the table. Billy yanks Dustin out of one side of the booth and crowds Steve in opposite Max and Lucas.

“Better?” Steve asks, once Billy is settled next to him, but he knows the answer.

Billy nods. It helps that he has Steve tucked against the window, probably. That the only people near them are known quantities.

“Um, *hello?* ” Dustin says, now standing next to the table, displaced by Billy. He looks comically outraged, as he usually does.

“Here,” Steve slides a ten across the table. “Split it, give us a minute.”

Because Billy is still jittering. Because Steve can feel him thrumming with irritation under his skin. Because Steve is starting to feel on edge, too.

Dustin crosses his arms, looks five seconds from arguing, and Steve can't have that.

“I'll get you all another pizza, too. Just… seriously, a minute, okay?”

Dustin blinks at the clip of his tone. But Max is looking between them, tugging at Lucas already, taking the ten and nodding.

When they're gone, Steve slumps, scrubbing a hand over his face. He feels Billy press all against his side. A hot, steady presence. Steve leans into him until they're sharing each other's weight.

“Sorry,” Billy says, nose pressing against Steve’s hair. His breath is hot and heavy, coming quicker than normal. “It’s so *loud* in here. And people keep looking at us.”

Billy clearly means: *they’re looking at you* .

“People are gonna look, Billy.” Steve says, placing a hand over Billy's knee and squeezing. “But we can head outside and wait, if you want. If it's too much.”

“No,” Billy says, and Steve can feel the firmness, the unwillingness to yield. “I’m fine.”

Billy slouches a little, shouldering into Steve a bit more, until he’s sitting with his cheek on Steve’s shoulder, pressing him into the corner of the booth. There’s probably space for at least two adults on Billy’s other side, with how far he’s wedged them both into the safety of the space, but Steve knows no one is stupid enough to sit next to Billy.

Steve keeps his hand on his knee. The steady press of it a good anchor for the both of them.

Billy's right. It's loud and bright, and there are a lot of kids running around. People keep looking at them, as discreetly as they can manage, and Steve tries not to shift too much under that scrutiny.

“You can't keep people from looking,” Steve says, pressing the words to the curls on top of his head. “People are… stupid. And nosy. And they're probably wondering what you're even doing with me when

you could have anyone. That's not even accounting for the fact that we're both alphas. They'll get used to it, though. Especially if we keep going out like this and practically rubbing their faces in it."

Billy laughs and Steve can feel it against his neck. "Don't be an idiot. Everyone here knows I'm an ass. You're the catch."

With something like a wiggle, Billy presses himself impossibly closer, but he seems calmer now, less focused on everything around them and more on Steve, on this booth and this moment.

"No one's *asked* ," Billy says, and his voice is quieter than before. "No one's said a goddamn thing. At least not to me."

Like he's waiting for the pin to drop.

Steve shifts, fingers curling tighter over Billy's knee, sliding a bit higher and firming his grip. Like he's bracing to keep Billy from moving.

And he is. Because Billy's not wrong, the implication in his words isn't lost, and Steve is preparing for the burn of anger -- if it's to come at all.

"No," Steve says. "Not to you."

Steve can feel it bubbling in Billy's gut, the slow simmer of Billy's rage heating the bottom of his own ribcage. But he can also feel Billy trying to stay calm -- both with carefully measured breaths against Steve's side, and also with the way the heat keeps ebbing, like Billy's trying to bite it back, quash it out.

Billy takes one heavy breath, fingers wrapping around Steve's wrist. "What have they said?" he asks.

"Nothing that I can't handle, and barely even to my face." Steve assures.

"Yeah, that sounds totally fine," Billy grumbles.

There's deep skepticism there, fear, and more anger. There's a wave of *mine-protect* that comes from Billy, as calloused fingers tighten over

Steve's wrist.

"It isn't." Steve says-- confesses, really-- but he keeps his palm flat and warm against Billy's thigh. "It sucks, honestly. But they're too afraid of you to try that pass-by-bullshit, so they say it in my direction because it's safer. It's not fine. But it will be. They'll get used to it -- or I will."

Anger flares, white hot and burning inside Steve's rib cage.

But Billy stays tucked on Steve's shoulder, perhaps held there by the weight of Steve's hand on his thigh, steadied by Steve's breathing.

"I hate that," Billy says.

"I know," Steve says, gasping a little, hand pressing to Billy's chest and fingers splaying out, until the heat ebbs off again and Steve shudders. "I know, Billy. I'm sorry."

And *that's* what has Billy pulling back so Billy can look at Steve, eyes narrowed. " *You're* sorry?" Incredulous. "What the fuck, pretty boy. *I'm* sorry. You shouldn't have to deal with any of that shit. I should -- I should --"

Billy trails off, lips pressing into a frown.

"I should *help* ." Billy says. "I should fix it."

Steve smiles. Can't help it.

"And how would you do that? Beat everyone that looked at me funny?"

"Uh -- *yes* ?"

Like it's obvious, like that's the way to deal with any problems. And for Billy -- well, Steve knows that's just how it is. It's *true* . Whether it's right or not.

But Steve can't help the snort he gives. Can't help but laugh, leaning into Billy, into the heat of him, and finding comfort there. Into the steadfast strength of him.

“How about I make you a deal?” Steve asks, lips pressing to Billy's cheek, then trailing to his ear. “Next time someone calls me an *omega bitch* in passing, I'll tell you who, and you get one good right hook in on them.”

Steve doesn’t even need a verbal answer. He feels Billy’s delight, the sharp bite of the *yes* .

And, yeah, fine, maybe Billy won’t exactly stop at one punch. But he’ll stop when Steve asks him to, and that’s what’s important.

That’s when Max slides in next to Billy, and Dustin and Lucas across the booth.

Steve pulls back a little when Dustin clears his throat. He doesn't get far, though, not with Billy pressed flush to him.

“Your minute is up,” Dustin says. “Also, there are, like, children here.”

Billy bristles next to Steve. “We’re not even fucking making out, you little twerp.”

“ *Yet* ,” Max grumbles next to him.

Billy kicks her under the table. Steve can feel it, the way Billy moves against him. “Shove it, Max.” But there’s no anger behind it. Things don’t seem as heated between the two of them, as of recently. “The arcade isn’t really my scene. Doesn’t get my motor running.”

“I dunno,” Steve shrugs. “The smell of stale popcorn and greasy pizza is kinda getting to me. Do I feel a little hot to you, Billy? I feel a little hot.”

“Gross,” Lucas says at the same time Dustin covers up his ears.

“It's like watching my mom flirt,” Dustin makes a face, teeth scraping over his tongue.

Billy cackles, looping an arm around Steve’s back, over his shoulders to pull him close. “Baby, you’re always hot to me.”

“Aw,” Steve turns into him, takes his jaw in a hand, and kisses the corner of his mouth -- just because he can, just to prove to Billy that it doesn't matter what people say or if they approve, Steve's going to kiss him anyways-- and maybe because fucking with the kids gives Steve a little thrill of delight. “You're sweet. But you don't have to try so hard. I'm a sure thing.”

“We're *right* here!” Dustin screeches, and Lucas buries his face in his arms.

“ *Billy* ,” Max says, slapping at his shoulder. She’s the only one who will touch Billy without fear of any sort of retaliation, which is smart -- because Billy has far more patience for her than anyone else. “You’re being gross!”

Eventually, Billy pulls back from Steve a bit, and he seems distracted, a little delighted. Certainly no longer agitated and enraged. “You guys are no fun.”

“That's us, the fun police,” Dustin levels them with a dirty look. “Can you stop groping each other, now?”

“We're not groping each other,” Steve says, but his hand slides subtly higher up Billy’s thigh.

Dustin points a finger. “You owe us a pizza. And maybe an explanation about the mood swings.”

Billy grumbles and digs a crumpled bill out of his pocket, snarling a little when Steve tries to stop him and replace it with his own money.

“I'll go get the pizza. You have your biology lesson,” Billy says.

And he's clever, trying to beat a hasty retreat like that. But like hell it’s going to *work* .

Steve's eyes narrow, and he fists his hand into the back of Billy's shirt and tugs him back before he can even manage to cajole Max out of the way.

“They're not mood swings,” Steve says.

“Well, what are they?” Lucas asks

Billy rolls his eyes and Steve can feel it. He can't help but chuckle.

“We’re sharing moods,” Billy says. “We feel what the other person feels. It's not rocket science.”

“Wait,” Max says, pinning Steve with a look. “So you're stuck with all of Billy's bullshit?”

Steve snorts, palm pressing between Billy's shoulder blades, smile more honest-- fucking besotted and smitten as it is -- than the teasing lilt of his tone. “Pretty much.”

“That *sucks* ,” Dustin says.

“Yeah, it's awful,” Billy says sarcastically. “Now I'm stuck with all of these stupid *mothering instincts* .” But Steve can feel how pleased he is, knows how much Billy is calmed by Steve's emotions.

Max laughs and it sounds a lot like Billy's, even though they aren't related. “That's a big fat lie. You don't have one empathetic bone in your body.”

“True,” Billy says, reaching over to drag his knuckles over her head. “You're the worst and I hate you.”

“Asshole,” Max spits, shoving at him, but they can all see the way her lips purse, like she's trying not to smile.

Dustin leans eagerly forward. “What else can you do? Like, could we steal Steve and Billy could find him?”

Billy's laughing, but he pauses then, unsure. “I -- don't know. Could I?”

They've been spending so much time together, Billy practically living in Steve's house as he knows better than to *go home* , that they haven't had much time apart.

Dustin's eyes go wide. “We could test it!”

Lucas groans. “We're *not* testing it.”

“But it could be cool,” Dustin turns to him. “Like, at what distance does it stop? Does it stop at all? Could you guys be on opposite ends of the world and still, like, *feel* each other?”

“I don't know,” Steve says, on a laugh, but his brows are pinched.

“Does it fade? Do you have to-- I dunno, *renew* it, or something?”

Steve glances at Billy. Thinks about their connection fading. Hates the idea immediately.

If it did, he wonders if Billy would want to bite him again. Wonders if Billy would want to renew it at all, if it's something they have to do.

“I'm not sure,” Steve says, and he tries to reel back the uneasiness in his stomach, so Billy can't feel it.

But Billy's hand curls over Steve's knee and Steve isn't sure if he caught the tail end of it or if Billy's just being handsy.

“We aren't a science experiment,” Billy says.

And that's that.

He leans over and pressed his lips to Steve's cheek. “What are we going to make these losers eat on their pizza?”

“Anchovies,” Steve says, just to see the faces that they make. “And extra onion.”

Dustin *glares.* “He's turned you *evil* .”

Steve laughs, looking at Billy, and he knows this conversation will reach the rest of the kids. Knows it'll probably reach Jonathan and Nancy, too.

He knows it's not the end of it. That they've just started, just begun, but he's kind of excited to see where it all goes. With Billy at his side, the idea if the future isn't so scary.

It's certainly less lonely.

“Only a little,” Steve says, but Billy’s grinning back at him, and Steve remembers thinking, months ago, that Billy would ruin him.

He doesn't think he was wrong. He's just surprised by how delightful that ruin will be.

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“Is that it?” Steve asks, words bitten around a bendy straw in a glass of lemonade.

It’s the powdered kind of lemonade, bright pink and sugary and strange. The kids love it, so Steve begrudgingly buys it -- which works out well, because Billy loves it too. Maybe that’s why Steve buys it in the first place, but Billy likes to think he’s still got *some* secrets.

“When I said ‘a couple of boxes’ I wasn’t kidding. What, did you think I had *stuff* ?”

“Pretty sure five is more than *a couple* ,” Steve says.

Billy hums, leaning on one of the boxes. Five is still not a lot, but it’s his whole life, crammed haphazardly into cheap cardboard and it feels *so good* .

“Not all of us can be decked out in Italian designer shit all the time, pretty boy,” Billy says, but his tone is teasing and the hollow between the two of them is filled to the brim with pleased contentment. Just chock-full of something that feels a hell of a lot like sunny optimism. Billy blames Steve for that, but he knows it’s not just Harrington, knows it’s coming from inside himself, too.

“It's not *just* Italian, thank you.” Steve says from his perch on the counter, a playful prim look on his face, like he's trying to be offended and is failing spectacularly.

“Oh, sorry,” Billy says with a grin -- one of the special ones he saves for when he’s really trying to charm the pants off someone. “Didn’t mean to throw your favorite French designers under the bus.”

“You should be,” Steve says, but he's grinning too, setting his drink aside and kicking his feet a little, sitting there in nothing but a pair of boxers and a loose t-shirt; Billy thinks it might be his. “And the Swiss, too. They made that watch, you know.”

Steve gestures to it, to the watch Billy refuses to take off unless he has to.

“This couldn’t be designer,” Billy says. “Some chump gave it to me. Wouldn’t trust him with fashion to save my *life* .”

Which is absolutely untrue, because whenever Steve dresses Billy, Billy always looks *great* . Not that he’s let it happen many times at all -- but when he does, it’s something special.

Steve is laughing, eyes bright and smile wide. “Sounds like a real dumbass. What were you thinking, hanging out with a guy like that?”

“No clue,” Billy says. “I must be pretty head over heels, or something.”

He pushes himself up from his lean on the box and stretches. He’s not really sore from moving the boxes, but he *is* sore from work yesterday.

Since a little before graduation, Billy’s been working construction with one of the local businesses. Steve got him talking to Hopper, who got him talking to this guy named Jack, who owns *Jack & Sons Construction.* The guy inherited the business from his father, who was also named Jack -- but unfortunately, all of Jack’s *& Sons* have either expressed very little interest in construction, or they’re currently at college. So, Jack’d been in the market for some extra hands.

Billy works with Jack’s daughter, who *is* interested in construction. She’d been willing to teach him the ropes *and* she hadn’t seemed to care at all about Billy being the current center of the town’s gossip.

Really, it’s been pretty perfect.

Steve's expression softens. His eyes stray, but when they meet Billy's again, his smile is soft and so sure.

“Head over heels, huh?”

He doesn't need to ask, though. They're sitting in the proof of that sentiment, boxes piled high, fridge full of takeout until they can get enough dishes for them to cook with.

Steve's got the whole summer and a hefty savings to sit on, before he starts working with his dad. While Mr. Harrington had kicked up a fuss about waiting until August to tuck Steve under his wing, guilt and Steve's terrifying mother seemed to make him cave. And while Billy had come to realize how much of an asshole Steve's dad could be, the man was too wormy to go toe to toe with the Chief of Police when Hopper had congratulated Steve and Billy on their successful bond, making waves about how half the town thought they were so *brave* .

Steve's dad had left them be with Steve's promise to take up the reigns at the end of summer, happier to have Steve under someone else's roof if there was going to be trouble, but with an heir to the business still on the table. And Steve's mom had insisted on furnishing their new place.

Billy liked Steve's mom.

She’s practical, pragmatic, and downright *terrifying* . She’s good at commanding a room and good at making people strangely comfortable. She’s also oddly good at interior decorating, which isn’t really a *surprise,* given the interior of the Harrington’s house, but honestly, he’d thought they had paid someone to put that shit together.

Anyway, Billy’s kind of in love.

With Mrs. Harrington -- and with her son, too, even though Billy hasn’t necessarily admitted that out loud, yet.

It’s weird, somehow, to admit that he loves Steve. It shouldn’t be, given that they’re *bonded* now -- but there’s something about the realization that makes it all feel more real, more tangible. Feeling Steve’s emotions, being connected to him because of a moment of passion shared in the front seat of Billy’s Camaro is nothing

compared to saying that he loves Steve Harrington with all his damn heart.

Billy loves him even more when he's sitting on the counter of *their* apartment, clad in his boxers and one of Billy's shirts, drinking pink lemonade and chewing on the straw like a goddamn *loser* .

So, Billy pushes himself forward and lopes toward the counter, tucking himself between Steve's dangling, kicking legs.

"Hey," he says.

"Hi," Steve says, knees squeezing at his hips.

"So," Billy says.

He knows he does a piss poor job of stifling that sudden spike of anxiety in his gut. He knows it rolls toward Steve, sharp and electric and brittle.

But Steve's always good at soothing him. Has been, really, since even before the bond set in. A hand on his arm, a soft *Billy* in his ear, a look just meant for him.

He does it now. Sets his lemonade aside again, slides his hands up Billy's arms and leans in, kissing him with lips that taste sweet and a bit sour.

"So," he says, and curls a hand at Billy's nape, squeezing. "What's going on in that thick head of yours?"

"You taste like chemicals," Billy says -- which, like, isn't *at all* what he was aiming for.

But his frustration is soothed over almost immediately before it can even amp up.

"Are you *sure* you can't read minds?" Billy asks. "That would be way more convenient."

"Nope," Steve grins, tugging Billy closer. "Not my forte. You're gonna have to use your big boy alpha words."

Billy laughs, posture going a little easy, muscles in his shoulders going loose. “Oh my god, you’re the *worst* .”

He tilts his head up and catches Steve in another kiss, though he knows it’s stalling so he only lets it last for so long. When Billy pulls back, he’s smiling around the knot in his stomach, the anxiety clawing at the bottom of his rips as he looks into those big brown eyes.

“You’re the worst and I fucking love you, Steve Harrington.”

Steve goes still. Stares at him, lips parted, and the only thing that keeps Billy from spiraling into a panic is the sudden *rush* , the heady and overwhelming echo of those words that comes thrumming up from Steve's side of the bond.

In one moment, they're still, together. There's the sound of morning birdsong through the thin windows. The heat of something fantastical and brilliant beating between them.

Then, Steve is pulling him in and catching his mouth again. Kissing him long and slow and sweet. He still tastes like lemonade.

“I know,” Steve says, between one kiss and the next, laughing against his lips, framing Billy’s face between his palms, and Steve had mentioned it, once, the feeling of *belonging* he'd spent so long chasing, and Billy can taste it on Steve's tongue. “I love you, too.”

It’s not the same as a bond. It doesn’t carry as much biological weight. But it feels *more important* , somehow. Steve’s words have weight, and so do Billy’s -- and they leave something sparking and alight between the two of them. Something alive and incandescent.

“ *I know* ,” Billy mumbles with a grin that threatens to break his face in half as he surges forward and kisses Steve again. “ *I know* , he says, all fuckin’ proud and shit. I’m in love with an asshole.”

But it’s good, it’s *so good* that Billy feels like he can’t contain himself, can’t contain the joy in his veins.

And he can’t just *stand* there, so he wraps his arms around Steve and hoists him off the counter, Steve’s legs wrapping around his waist for

support. Steve drapes his arms over his shoulders, and he's laughing as Billy holds him easily, smile bright and eyes brighter -- and it's *better* . Better than anything Billy had ever hoped for.

“Yeah, well, takes an asshole to love an asshole.” Steve says, kissing at Billy's jaw.

Walking them into their room -- *their own goddamn room* -- is easy. It’s even easier dropping Steve on the bed and crowding in on top of him.

“I want it,” Billy says, nosing at Steve’s neck. “I want you to mark me. I want you to take me. I wanna be yours, baby.”

Steve groans, shuddering up under him, and he fists a hand into Billy's curls and Billy’s shirt. “God, yes. Yeah. Anything you want.”

He shifts his weight, swings Billy over into his back until Steve's straddling him. He stares down at him, eyes hungry, smile promising a million things.

He dips down and presses a kiss to the corner of Billy's mouth.

“You want me to bite you before?” He asks, grazing his teeth against Billy's jaw. “Or after?”

Billy feels himself go easy under Steve, submitting to him like he wouldn't have done so long ago. It's so simple now, so natural.

“Not sure.” His heart is already racing, his pulse hammering. He thinks about it, imagining the scenarios.

Steve, biting him and then taking him.

Steve working his way into Billy, biting him as they're loose and spent afterward.

Or Steve, teeth in his neck while his knot fills Billy up.

White hot want spikes straight through him.

“Oh god,” Billy groans. “When you're knotting me. That's -- that's what I want.”

Steve’s throat works. He's already nodding, but he's precariously nonverbal -- the way he gets, sometimes, Billy has found, when their combined *want* gets to his head too much. Billy kind of loves when he gets like that. Has watched him break apart from barely anything more than that.

He peppers kisses against the line of Billy's throat, tugging at his shirt. He kisses at an old bruise and lingers there.

“Yeah, I want that. I want it.” Steve breathes. “Want you *so bad* .”

Billy can't help the wave of nervousness that hits him. Even with Steve steadying him, it's a rush and kind of terrifying. It's not like Billy's been putting it off, but they had both been waiting for the right time. For something that feels perfect.

It feels perfect now.

But it's still terrifying.

“I *need* it,” Billy say, because it's the truth. “Wanna feel it like you feel it.”

He lets Steve tug him out of his shirt, hips rolling up to meet Steve's from where he's straddling him.

Steve hisses, hands splaying out over his abdomen and pressing him down. He closes his eyes, breathing out slow, but Billy can see how hard he already is.

When he meets Billy’s gaze again, his pupils are blown. His fingers trace up the lines of muscle over Billy's chest, and he curves down to mouth over the spot over Billy's heart.

“Careful,” Steve warns, but he grinds down anyways, because they both know the feedback can catch them up and leave them blissed and high on it. “I still have to work you open. You don't want me to pop off early.”

Billy can’t help the spike of *want* that shoots through him, can’t help the way he lusts after Steve’s touch from the way Steve pushes him back down. It gets Billy running *hot* , has him panting.

“How do you want me, baby?” Billy asks.

Steve *groans* , low and full, pressing his forehead to Billy's chest. “ *Fuck* . Fuck, I don't even know. Too many options.”

He kisses over the racing *thud* of Billy's heart again. Smoothes his hands down his sides. Peers up at him with dark eyes.

“How do you want me to take you? Like this, on your back?” Steve asks, trailing kisses over his skin, tasting him every now and then. “Wanna ride me like I rode you? Or do you wanna be on your knees for me?”

Billy shudders, squirming under Steve’s attentions. His hands slide over Steve’s back, fisting his shirt until he’s pulling off Steve’s as well, leaving them both shirtless and warm.

It’s almost too many options -- Billy just *wants* Steve. Wants to be his, wants to feel him. But it’s not as hard to choose as he might have thought. “Like this. Wanna be able to watch you, want you -- jesus, I want you to fuck me into this goddamn bed.”

“That can definitely be arranged,” Steve hums, and his fingers drop to Billy's pants.

He threads his belt loose and tosses it aside, squirming down until he can press his face to Billy's crotch. He mouths over him, through his briefs once his fly is open, the cotton growing damp and warm under his tongue. Tugging Billy’s pants down his thighs, he sucks, making Billy buck and twitch beneath him.

It doesn’t take long for Steve to get Billy begging, briefs damp from Steve’s spit, cock hard and straining against wet cotton.

“Baby,” Billy pants. “Baby, *please* .”

Steve glances up at him, curling his fingers into the elastic and pulling, sliding them down, down his legs until Billy is bare and spread over their bed. He kisses his hip, then the top of his leg, then hooks his shoulder under one of Billy's knees as he settles between his legs and bites at the sensitive skin on his inner thigh.

“Lube,” Steve mutters, like he refuses to move from exactly where he is, fingers around the base of Billy's cock, mouth quickly following.

And jesus, like Steve thinks *Billy* can move? Billy can’t help but laugh a little, nerves and amusement sparking between them. His hips buck, cock covered by the warmth of Steve’s mouth. It’s always *so much* , trying to separate out the feelings between the two of them.

Instead of grabbing lube, Billy fists one hand in the sheets, the other hand in Steve’s hair, and whines. He can feel Steve groan around him, can feel the prickle of pain over his scalp heightening the pleasure, can feel Steve press his tongue just right and *suck* .

But then Steve is pulling off, panting and flush. He leans up, fumbling the side table open, plucking out the lube there, and Billy can see the damp spot on Steve's boxers where the head of his cock is straining.

“You're gonna kill me,” Steve rasps, laying heavily over him, draping skin on skin to kiss him, and then sneaking back down to the welcome cradle of Billy's thighs. Of getting his mouth around Billy like he can't get enough of the weight of him on his tongue.

Steve *really likes* blowing him. Billy found that out a little while after they bonded -- especially when they get so lost in the sensation feedback that Steve gets off easily with just Billy’s cock spreading his lips obscenely like this.

He doesn't get to think too long about that, though, because slick fingers are sliding between his cheeks, seeking, and rubbing gently as Steve distracts him with his mouth.

It's hard to concentrate on anything at all. Billy's mind keeps jumping from sensation to sensation, never caught on one for long enough to lose himself in it completely. He feels Steve's arousal, his desire, just like he feels his own. It hits Billy in waves, warm and all encompassing and unavoidable.

“Baby,” Billy pleads, as Steves fingers run slick over sensitive flesh.

It's all it takes for Steve to slip a finger inside him.

Billy groans, the sound cut off in his throat, focus sliding between

Steve's mouth, his cock, and the finger pushing inside him. It's weird and strange and so *good* that Billy has no words, just broken sounds.

Steve works him over like that for a long stretch. Eases slick over tight muscles, careful but steady, gentle and kind. Keeps his mouth on him until Billy is panting, until he's relaxed enough to tease with a second finger.

He pulls off gasping, lips red and wet, cheeks flush. “You'll tell me if I need to slow down,” he says, almost like a question, and Billy can feel how tentative he is, even as he kisses over his hip.

Billy laughs, or something like it, fingers tightening in Steve's hair. “I think you need to stop blowing me, that's for damn sure.”

He feels like a live wire, electric and ready to spark. He's pretty damn sure he could come from Steve's fingers alone, not even encouraged by that pretty mouth or that wicked tongue.

Steve's fingers move and it has Billy’s hips arching off the bed, seeking *more.* “More. C’mon -- I'm not gonna break.”

Steve hums, kissing over the flex of muscle under the skin of his abdomen. He curls his fingers deeper, into the tight heat of Billy's body, and eases him open. Works him over with careful touches. Bites at the soft skin below Billy's navel.

“I like blowing you,” Steve says. “Like feeling you on my tongue and how fucking tight you get.”

“I know you do,” Billy says, squirming, hips arching off the bed again. He gasps, panting, as Steve's fingers work his muscles looser, more relaxed. “Can feel how much you like it. It's why you gotta stop.”

Not like Billy is all that certain he can keep himself together just like this. It's all so much, so oddly freeing, giving himself to Steve like this.

It feels weighty, important. But it's hard to concentrate on that when his cock is leaking onto his stomach and Steve's fingers are working magic inside him, slick and perfect.

“You're so beautiful,” Steve breathes against his skin, pressing harder, spreading his fingers out.

But then he's withdrawing, pulling loose and slicking up his fingers more, before easing three against lax muscle. Kissing, reverent and slow over Billy's chest, stretching and prepping him with such care it's like worship. It never hurts. Not once. Steve is too careful for that.

And Billy knows, from Steve, that sometimes the bite of pain can be good, can bring another dimension into the sensation, but that's not for now, not for this moment. Right now, Billy wants to feel safe and taken care of, and Steve gives him just that. Makes him feel so secure and looked after and doted on.

Three fingers becomes easy, Billy losing himself to the slide of Steve's fingers into him, the way his body just takes and takes and takes, begging to let Steve fill him. Billy's fingers go to Steve's shoulders, fingers digging into flesh as Steve presses a gentle kiss to Billy's hip.

“God, Steve, baby, *please,”* Billy begs.

“You think you're ready for me?” Steve asks, and his breath is heavy and hot against the crook of his leg, against his straining cock; Steve mouths at the base of him, curling his fingers *just right* , like he can't fucking help himself.

Billy whines, because he knows the fucking answer to that. He does. He's ready for Steve's cock, ready for Steve to split him open, but if he wants Steve's knot -- which he *does* , god he does -- he needs a little more.

“Another,” Billy whines, squirming as Steve mouths over him. “Gimme another, and then I want you to fuck me through the fucking mattress.”

“Easy,” Steve tells him, settles him with a hand on the flat of his stomach, but then he's carefully spreading Billy wider, fingers slippery with slick, so fucking gentle and steady and kind -- easing when Billy grunts and whispering praise against his skin. “Doing so well, Billy. God, you're so damn gorgeous.”

Four is harder, Billy's body not accustomed to it like Steve's has gotten. But it's so good -- and it gets even easier when Billy imagines for a moment that it's Steve's knot splitting him open. He nearly chokes on the thought, pleasure sparking white hot between them. The thought is new and taboo and so goddamn appealing that Billy can't shake it.

He feels like he's going mad with desire, shuddering under Steve's praise.

“Good enough,” Billy says, fingers tugging and pulling Steve back to him. “Please, babe, please. God, I need you in me.”

“Okay,” Steve says, following as Billy pulls, kissing his cheek and his jaw and the side of his mouth, fingers still buried deep and *pressing* , gliding over that bundle of nerves that has Billy jerking. “I've got you. I'm gonna make it so good for you.”

It's better, somehow, impossibly better, with Steve over him, kissing him. Working that spot inside him. Pressing his weight against Billy's body.

Billy nearly sobs, panting and rocking up against Steve. Grinding against him as Steve fingers him.

“God, *fuck,”* Billy breathes, barely able to recognize the sound of his own voice.

Steve moans. He stares down at him, eyes dark and hungry and hot, lips parted. He withdraws and then presses in deep again, just to watch Billy writhe and arch up.

“Gorgeous,” Steve mumbles, littering his face and jaw and neck with kisses. “Could watch you break apart like this forever. So gorgeous, baby. And all mine.”

He punctuates his claim with a long drag of his tongue up over the heavy beat of Billy's pulse. Nips at that soft skin. Curls his fingers again and works circles around those nerves with his fingertips.

He's panting, open mouthed, against Billy's throat. Rutting a bit, throbbing in his boxers. And then he's pulling free, pulling away,

stripping down to nothing and finding home between Billy's splayed legs.

His hands are sure and soft up Billy’s thighs. But his fingers dig in at Billy's hips and pull, tugging him closer before slicking up his cock and guiding himself forward, Billy’s legs draped over the tops of his thighs where he's knelt.

“Tell me if I need to stop,” he says, pressing the head of himself, weeping and hot, to the slick heat between Billy's legs and then pressing, pressing, pressing in.

Billy doesn't think he's even capable of stopping at this point. Anything Steve can give him is something Billy wants.

Steve presses in, splitting Billy open, slowly filling him in the most gentle way. It's enormously overwhelming, the heat of Steve, the size of him, the way he fits perfectly. For a moment, Billy is absolutely still, just lost to the feeling of it, the sensation.

Then, Billy breaks. He can't help but squirm, pushing Steve further into him as Billy catches him in a kiss. Wet and needy, fingers dragging down his back to pull Steve even closer.

Steve groans into his mouth. His fingers dig in at Billy's hips, sliding in until he's completely seated, buried to the hilt and gasping against Billy's mouth. He shakes above him, still except for the way he shudders and kisses Billy stupid, curled over him and holding him close.

“I love you,” Steve gasps against his lips, hands sliding up under the curve of Billy's lower back, rocking just that much deeper. “I love you, Billy.”

Billy *whines* , unable for a moment to do anything more. He's so full, so tight, so overwhelmed. And then Steve presses deeper and like hell Billy can get out any *words.*

He rocks his hips up, unable to stop himself, rutting against the firm lines of Steve's stomach. It's so much, too much, and yet here he is, wanting more.

“Love you,” he manages, “fuck, I love you.”

“Yeah,” Steve breathes, and his smile is brilliant and so bright. “Yeah, I know. I can feel it.”

He catches Billy's hands with his own, after getting his knees under himself and canting Billy’s hips up until Billy's heels are hooked behind his thighs. He weaves their fingers together and rocks again, pressing Billy’s hands to the sheets, kissing him slow.

“I know --” Steve's breath catches, the tight and wet heat of Billy's body knocking him breathless and making him shudder and buck. “I know you do. It's fucking breathtaking. Didn't know anyone would ever love me so much. Didn't know anyone would love me like you do. Like I love you.”

Steve kisses him then. Starts moving then. Pulls out slow and presses back in slower, angling his hips and grinding in, just to make Billy gasp and quiver.

And then he sets a rhythm. It's not fast or rough or hard. It's sweet. Steady and slow, Steve spending more time buried completely in him and pressing in all the right ways more often than not, and he squeezes at Billy's fingers and rocks into him just like that.

It's nothing Billy would have asked for, but everything Billy *needs* . And Steve knows that. Billy knows that Steve knows that -- and it makes it all the more meaningful.

Billy is a wreck, little noises and moans and curses tumbling out of him with each thrust. He kisses Steve when he can, when he can manage that kind of coordination.

Time stretches on, moments blurring together in a feedback loop of pleasure. Billy’s, Steve's -- all of it swirling and coalescing into the space between them, alive and electric and breathtaking.

Steve's hips move a little faster the longer he draws it out. Even taking Billy, eating up the sounds he makes and working into him the way he is, he's still biting out these ridiculous noises -- heavy moans, panted keens he presses into Billy's skin.

Soon, though, Steve is clutching at Billy's hands. Clinging and driving in, breath pooling in the hollow of Billy's throat.

“God,” Steve gasps. “ *God* . You feel so -- fuck, Billy, I can't. Tell me you're close --”

And Billy can feel the way Steve is holding back. The way his hips twitch, urgent and a little quicker on the slide in, the way he drags out faster because being buried in him is *too much* . Can feel pleasure burning, like a living flame, between them.

And jesus, the faster Steve goes, the closer Billy gets. Until he's panting, until he's begging up at the ceiling. Drowning in the combined pleasure between them.

“Wanna -- *god* ,” Billy pants. “Wanna come on your fucking knot.”

He wants to feel Steve swell inside him, wants to feel the wet hot rush of Steve filling him to the brim and stuffing him full. Hell, he wants to feel Steve's come drip down his thighs.

“Baby, please,” Billy begs, biting back just how close he is. “Please. So close.”

Steve spits a curse and fucks into him *harder* . Presses impossibly *deeper* . Buries his face against Billy’s throat, tongue lathing over the spot Billy knows he intends to bite, and Steve bucks once, twice-- and then he’s spilling out into him, groaning, teeth pressing to skin.

He buries in to the hilt, pumping Billy full, and his knot comes easy as it always does with Billy. Swells against the tight clench of Billy’s heat, locks into him as he ruts. And Steve doesn’t hesitate, doesn’t wait a second longer, because they’re tied completely together in every way the second his teeth pierce flesh-- pain bright and effervescent and cresting on the waves of completely and totally overwhelming pleasure.

Billy doesn't have a chance.

Pleasure hits him like an explosion, brilliant and bright, nerves ablaze with sensation. He comes hard, with something that feels like a scream but it's muffled in his own head, everything else so loud, so

dizzying. It's perfect, it's amazing, it's *everything,* all at once.

Steve's teeth pierce his skin and it's like everything slots perfectly into place. The connection between them comes alight, somehow even more beautiful and charged than before.

It's not the orgasm that's important, Billy thinks, catching the aftershocks of it as Steve laps at the blood on his neck. It's this, the closeness between them, the bond, the feeling. Billy wraps his arms around Steve and mumbles *i love you i loveyouiloveyou* until he has to pant to catch his breath.

But it's as the pleasure starts to fade that Billy starts to really feel it, the press of Steve's knot filling him, stuffing him to the brim.

He whines, he can't help it. “Fuck, you're *big* ,” Billy says, fingers digging a little, clawing against Steve's back as his hips rock without his permission.

Steve grunts. Presses a tender kiss to Billy’s neck, right above the bite once he’s sure it’s going to be okay without his constant attention, and he slides his arms under him and around him, cradling him close.

“Christ,” Steve pants against him, shaking, and Billy can feel the pound of his heart in his own veins. “God, don’t say shit like that. M’like, five seconds from coming again. *Jesus* .”

“Didn't think it’d feel like this,” Billy says, and his voice is *wrecked* . “It's so fucking *good* .”

He's a mess and he knows it. Panting and sweaty and spent -- and still, he can't help the way his hips rock against Steve’s knot, body delighting in the little sparks of pleasure it brings. Each rut of his hips drags his cock through his own come on Steve's stomach and it's filthy, messy, and so goddamn perfect.

“Fill me up, baby,” Billy says with a breathy laugh, punctuated with a very badly stifled moan. “Breed me.”

Steve groans, but his shoulders are shaking a bit like he’s laughing too, and he bites somewhere below Billy’s collar. “Shut the *fuck* up,

Billy."

But then he's scooping him up, like it's easy, rocking back and pulling Billy with him into his lap. Their bodies still connected, Steve's knot still hot and heavy and *big* inside of Billy. Steve's hands stroke up his back, and he ruts up a little, kissing under Billy's chin.

"You want me to fill you up?" Steve asks, and his voice is a dark hush, invitingly wicked, something Billy doesn't get to see too often but is always a delight. "Rock for me. Ride my knot, baby."

Shifting makes Steve's cock, his knot, press into Billy differently, somehow *more* , it feels like. Like gravity is forcing Billy down, making Steve fill him all the more.

Steve's voice fills Billy with heat, with desire. He wouldn't bend like this to anyone but Steve, wouldn't ever let anyone else tell him what to do. But with Steve -- *it's special.* It's trust that's earned.

And so Billy presses down, rocks forward with a groan, letting himself pant against Steve's neck while Steve's hands run over his back.

He's so sensitive, but he can't help the way his body seeks *more, more, more.* Can't help the way he moans, the way he grinds down like he's consumed by it, the way he starts to plead for impossibly more.

Steve moves with him. Rolls his hips with him, slow and steady, and it's like they're dancing, almost, in the most intimate way that they can. To a rhythm that only either of them will ever hear.

Steve pants against his ear, slides his arms tighter around him, and moans. "Fuck. Fuck, you feel so good. Fuckin' love feeling you like this."

He wedges a hand between them. Uses some of Billy's come to slick over his fingers and wraps them around Billy's half soft cock-- strokes. Feels Billy jolt against him and holds him tighter as he groans.

He kisses at his bite mark, cranes his neck to do it, and hums as satisfaction zips between them.

“I ever tell you--?” Steve gasps, and they’re both sweaty and breathless, both hanging on that hazy edge of too much. “I ever tell you about my rut? About what I thought about?”

Billy is so sensitive in Steve's hand, but it feels *so good* he couldn't possibly slap him away. Instead, he presses forward rutting against Steve's hand before rocking back on his knot.

“Tell me, fuck, baby-- tell me.”

“You,” Steve says. “I thought about if you’d stayed. If you hadn’t-- fuck, you can be such an asshole-- but I thought about you. Thought about *this* . Having you on my knot like this, feeling how fucking tight and *hot* you would be. Thought about you riding me until I couldn’t go anymore.”

Steve’s close. Billy can hear it. Can *feel it* . The way his muscles string tight and his body shakes. The way he jerks up a little under him.

“Started-- started off just like this, with you all soft and sweet for me.” Steve breathes, breath catching, throat working. “But you were always shoving me around-- thought about you pinning me down and *taking* what you wanted until you were a mess, too.”

“That's ‘cause -- you're such a slut for me,” Billy laughs, but he's so close too. Closer now that he's imagining just pushing Steve down to the bed and taking what he wants in a frenzy. He imagines doing it in his own rut, letting Steve fuck him instead of fucking Steve, and *that's* certainly something.

Billy grinds down with a groan, hips jerking harder, fucking himself on Steve's knot. So full.

Steve's fingers tighten and Billy whines. “God I fucking love this. I love you. I need -- god --” Billy’s hips work harder, more frantic. “Fill me up, c’mon. Make me yours. Wanna feel it.”

“ *Yeah* ,” Steve groans, bucking up, and his hand slides up to curl his fingers into Billy’s curls; he tugs a little, waits until Billy pulls back enough for him to catch his mouth, and then bucks up again as he

spills out into him, Billy's name on his lips as he does. " *God* , god, *Billy* ."

Billy can feel it, can feel the warmth of Steve's come inside him, the pleasure flowing between them. It pushes him so easily over the edge, has him gasping against Steve's mouth and spilling into his fingers.

And Steve's fingers are tight around him, wet and slick with Billy's come as he strokes him through it. It's only a second before Billy is choking out another groan, vision going white as his knot swells in Steve's fist.

"Fuck, *fuck,"* he groans, whole body shuddering with it. " *Steve."*

Steve hisses. Sucks a breath between his teeth and wraps his fist around Billy's knot, squeezing.

"I got you," Steve pants, but his words are half slurred in bliss. "Got you, baby. *Jesus* ."

His other hand drops to Billy's hip. Keeps him rocking, rutting through it, milks at Billy's knot for him.

Billy can't tell if he comes again in Steve's fist, over his fingers. Pleasure swirls around him as he buries his face in Steve's neck, panting, groaning, whining.

It's all so much. Steve splitting him wide, filling him up, breaking him open.

"Oh my fucking god," Billy manages after a little while. "What the *fuck?"*

How does Steve handle all this sensation? The answer, Billy knows, is that he revels in it, because it's *amazing* . Billy's drunk on it, killed by it.

Steve grins, dopey and sweet, and kisses the corner of his mouth. He's barely half hard in him, spent as he is, but he squeezes at Billy's knot and groans with him when Billy rides down onto him in reply.

“You're so ridiculously hot,” Steve says, hair hanging in his face, and they're both *disgusting* , but it's fucking great. “We're such a goddamn mess.”

“Mm,” Billy hums, catching Steve in a lazy kiss before he can completely pull away. “In *our* bed, in *our* apartment.”

And sure, life isn't perfect and the world isn't perfect, and Billy certainly isn't, but this moment is. And that's all that matters, Billy thinks.

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It's a Wednesday, two weeks into July when, after months of talking about it, they finally get out to the quarry.

The sun is bright and high, the hood of the Camaro warm under the blanket they draped over it. Steve's got bud on his breath, and Billy’s finishing off their blunt. Steve keeps toeing at Billy's side, grinning whenever he looks over, and every time he does it, Billy retaliates by pulling off his sneakers, one by one, then his socks -- his shorts are undoubtedly next.

The Thompson Twins are crooning on the radio. Billy thinks Steve can't hear him, but he's humming along despite all the bitching he did when Steve had popped the mixtape in, as Steve nudges at him again, singing *stay with me; let loving start* and Billy catches his ankle and flicks the last of their blunt away.

“Baby,” Billy warns, and Steve's eyes are bright, his smile crooked, where he's propped up on elbows, hair a disheveled mess.

“Yes, *sweetheart* ?” Steve's toes flex.

“Careful,” Billy warns him. “Don’t poke the tiger with a stick, pretty boy.”

Billy flashes him a mouth full of teeth, not unlike a wild cat. So different from a monster. He smiles more, now, now that his life is so full of Steve, so full of love.

“No?” Steve stares up at him through his lashes, coy if it weren't for

his grin. “What'll happen if I do?”

Billy shucks his pants, kicking them off into the dirt. Then, he pulls himself on top of the hood of the Camaro, crawling up on his hands and knees until he’s over Steve, bracketing him in.

“Oh, I donno,” Billy murmurs, lips finding the bondmark on Steve’s neck. “I’m sure I can think of *something* .”

But he’s lazy, in no hurry for it. Instead, captivated, as always, by Steve.

Steve lets his head fall back, laughing as Billy hovers over him, warm and wonderful. “I'm sure you can.”

It’s so hot, with the sun beating down against Billy’s back, but its golden and perfect and the day is lovely and calm. He catches Steve’s lips in his own and kisses him, hungry and deep. Billy falls onto his forearms, so he’s closer to Steve, so his bare chest is pressed against the cotton of Steve’s shirt. There’s no urgency to it, though -- just affection, caught in the moment.

Steve hums against his mouth, arching up under him. He drapes his arms over Billy's shoulders, lazy and slow, canting his head over to invite him closer.

Billy takes the invitation for what it is, deepening the kiss, slipping his arms under Steve to pull him close. He takes his time with it, licking into Steve’s mouth until they’re both panting a little, until they’re even warmer than what the sun has given them.

It’s then that Billy rolls himself off the car, taking Steve with him. Scooping him up and hoisting him in his arms like Steve’s his bride, like Billy’s carrying him over the threshold.

Steve laughs as Billy jostles him a little, threading his fingers through his curls and kissing along his jaw.

“Where are you taking me?” Steve asks, but he thinks he knows.

Billy just grins. His chest is warm against Steve, hot from the sun and the kiss. He bounces Steve a little in his arms -- and starts walking

toward the water of the quarry's lake.

"Nowhere in *particular* ," Billy says, pressing his lips to Steve's cheek. "Maybe I just like carrying you."

"I'm still *dressed* ," Steve protests, squirming and shoving at Billy's face.

"Are you?" Billy says, aiming for shocked. "I hadn't noticed. That's a real fuckin' pity, baby."

Slowly, Billy wades into the water, already ankle deep and continuing on, grip getting tighter on Steve's squirming body.

"Billy," Steve shoves again, wiggling about, pushing at him, but he's in to the knee already. "Billy, c'mon -- these shorts are from Milan -- *Billy --!"*

Billy laughs, delighted, as he inches forward, lips going for Steve's neck. Kissing, then biting, then, just smiling against skin.

They get far enough that Billy clearly deems it *fine* -- and then he tosses Steve into the water with a bark of another laugh. It echoes across the water, just before Steve breaks the surface.

Steve lands with a splash and surfaces gasping. His hair is matted, shirt and shorts clinging, and Steve hits a wall of water Billy's way.

"You *dick* ," Steve dries his eyes on the back of his arm, and Billy is still laughing as he splashes at him. "I am *so* not cooking tonight. You just volunteered for my turn."

He strips his sopping wet shirt off and throws it in Billy's face.

Billy lets himself fall backwards as the shirt hits him, always delighted about being in the water, even if this man-made lake is a far cry from the wild oceans of California. His eyes hit the sky, drinking in the blue, the sun beating down on them.

"Mm," Billy says, floating on his back as Steve splashes him again. "How do you feel about pizza, then? With some pineapple and pepperoni and extra cheese?"

“I think you're lazy,” Steve says, and he throws his shorts somewhere toward shore before paddling over. “Stop blowing your paychecks on pizza.”

“But it’s *so good* ,” Billy says.

When he moves his arms to keep himself afloat, his hand brushes Steve’s torso. He lets it sit there, curling around his hip.

“And you’re much better at cooking than me,” Billy says.

Steve huffs out a breath, leaning in and pressing his lips to the tip of Billy's nose. “Spoiled,” Steve mutters, fond and adoring.

“Definitely am, baby,” Billy says. “You spoil me rotten.”

He wraps his arms around Steve, kicks, and pulls them both under the warm water again. Steve is laughing against his lips when they surface again.

He pushes Billy’s curls away from his face as they wrap around each other. Sinks his fingers into his hair and kisses him softly.

“You're lucky I like you so much,” he says.

“I know,” Billy says, words muffled by the stretch of his smile, the press of Steve’s lips. “I’m *so goddamn lucky* ,” he says, because it’s true, because Steve deserves to hear it, to know that Billy knows it.

“Me, too.” Steve breathes, curving his hand along his jaw, pressing his lips to Billy's cheek -- and he grins, kissing a spot right in front of his ear. “Hey, Billy?”

“Yeah, pretty boy? What’s up?”

Pulling back, just enough to meet Billy's eyes, to search over his face and find nothing but adoration there, Steve hums and kisses him once, briefly, pressing words to his lips.

“Chase me,” he says, already slipping away into the water, and he knows that he means more than just this game -- that he means something like forever -- and that the look in Billy’s eyes promises

nothing less.

And so -- easily and happily -- Billy does.

Author's Note:

> you can find us on tumblr at brawlite and toast-ranger-to-a-stranger. come say hi!